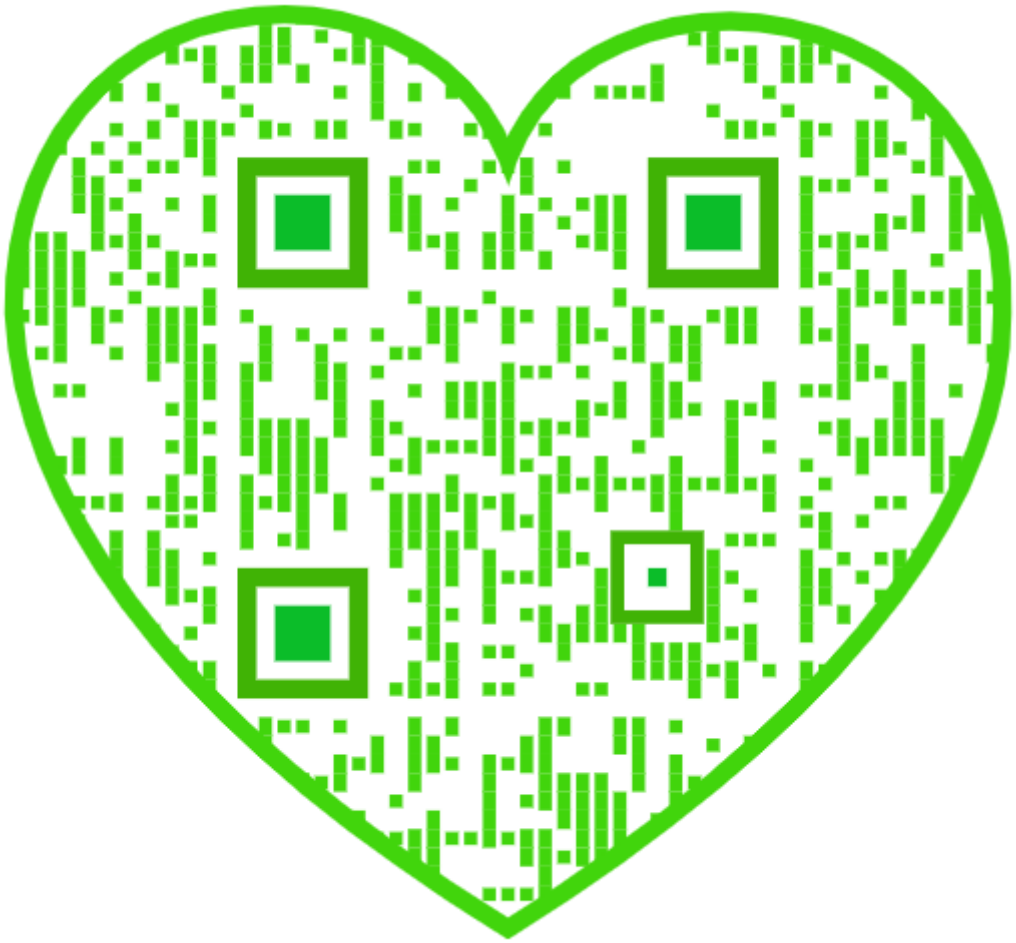

THE MONKS OF THE WEST

VOLUME THE FOURTH

THE

MONKS OF THE WEST

FROM ST. BENEDICT TO ST. BERNARD

BY THE

COUNT DE MONTALEMBERT

MEMBER OF THE FRENCH ACADEMY

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY THE

REV. F. A. GASQUET, D.D., O.S.B.

AUTHOR OF

"HENRY VIII. AND THE ENGLISH MONASTERIES"

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BOOK XII—(*continued*)

ST. WILFRID ESTABLISHES ROMAN UNITY AND THE BENEDICTINE ORDER, 634–709

"Sanctus haberi
Justitiæque tenax, factis dictisque mereris?
Agnosco procerem."—JUVENAL.

CHAPTER III

BEGINNING OF THE TRIALS OF WILFRID: ST. ETHELDREDA.—669–678

Wilfrid, reduced to a subordinate position, reconciles himself to King Oswy, who dies after a prosperous reign of twenty-eight years.—Extension of Northumbrian domination, and of Wilfrid's jurisdiction towards the north.—At the commencement of the new reign, alliance between him and King Egfrid, who triumphs both in the insurrection of the Picts and the invasion of the Mercians.—Episcopal virtues and austerities of Wilfrid.—His confirmation journeys; the child resuscitated.—Wilfrid's monasteries become centres of public education.—Services which he renders to the arts; music, spread of the Gregorian Chant.—Great architectural works at York, at Ripon, and especially at Hexham, where he builds the finest church on this side the Alps on land given by Queen Etheldreda.—Connection of Wilfrid with Etheldreda, the first and most popular of English female saints.—Her origin and connections.—Twice married, she succeeds in consecrating her virginity to God.—Wilfrid encourages her in her resistance to King Egfrid, and gives her the veil at Coldingham; Egfrid pursues her.—She flies to Ely.—Legends of her journey.—Foundation and monastic life at Ely.—The major-domo Owen.—Wilfrid continues to advise Etheldreda.—His quarrel with Egfrid provoked by the new queen, Ermenburge.—The Archbishop Theodore interferes in their disputes.—He deposes Wilfrid, and divides his diocese into three new bishoprics, which he confides to Celtic monks.—Wilfrid appeals to Rome.—The saints and great abbots of his country remain indifferent or hostile.—Strange ignorance of ecclesiastical right, even among the saints.

WHILE the Archbishop Theodore received everywhere the credit of the intellectual and moral prosperity of England, Wilfrid, re-established in his see, but eclipsed by the popularity and authority of the primate, appears to have been thrown back into a subordinate position. Nevertheless it was he who had given the first signal for this renewal of Roman influence in England, who had gained the decisive

battle of Whitby, who had begun, supported, and decided the struggle against the insular spirit and its exclusive tendencies, and who, in more than one trial, had paid the price of his spontaneous devotion. And it was a stranger from the depths of Asia Minor who came to reap what he had sown, while not one special mark of pontifical approbation or gratitude had honoured the first author and most intrepid champion of this happy revolution. In contemplating the triumphs of Theodore, there only remained for him to say, like the precursor of our Saviour, "He must increase, but I must decrease," and to prove the disinterestedness and sincerity of his soul, by lending all the assistance possible to his venerable rival.

This he did by sending deputies to the Council of Hertford. Enough occupation besides remained to him in dividing his life between the duties of the episcopate and those of his monastic profession. Reduced to a secondary rank, he could yet find ample satisfaction for his zeal for the good of souls and of the Church, above all, since his reconciliation with Oswy. This reconciliation was complete, and accompanied by such an adhesion to the opinions of Wilfrid on the part of the Bretwalda, that, having fallen ill, he conceived the project of going, if he recovered—he, the first of Saxon kings—to pass the remainder of his life near the tombs of St. Peter and St. Paul at Rome. He implored Wilfrid to accompany him, promising him new gifts to keep up that pomp and magnificence of worship which was so dear to the bishop. But the death of Oswy put a stop to this project. He died at the age of fifty-eight, after a reign of twenty-eight years, which had been signalised by the deliverance of his country, and by the overthrow of the pagan domination of the Mercians, and which, had it not been stained by the murder of the pious Oswin, would have been the most glorious and happy in the Saxon annals. He was buried at Whitby, in the great maritime monastery to which he had given his daughter as the price of his decisive victory over

the pagans. This daughter, Elfleda, on becoming abbess ten years after the death of her father, claimed his remains, and placed them beside those of her maternal grandfather Edwin, the first Christian king among the Northern English, so that the two greatest princes of the two rival Northumbrian dynasties reposed together in this monastic necropolis.[1]

This famous Oswy, last and greatest Bretwalda of whom history keeps any record, had established in the north of his kingdom a supremacy still more extensive in some respects, and more durable, than in the south. Passing the frontiers which his predecessors Edwin and Oswald had given to Northumbria on the Caledonian side, he subjugated all the territory between the Forth and the Tay.[2] But it was chiefly in the east of the central peninsula, in those districts which have since received the names of Lothian and the Marches, that he impressed on the institutions, manners, and language, that Anglo-Saxon character which, throughout the history of Scotland, remains so visibly distinct from the manners and traditions of Caledonia. Hence arose that partition of Scotland during the whole of its independent existence between two influences, or rather between two races, nominally ruled by the same kings, but distinct by language, laws, cultivation, and all the habits of life, and almost always at bitter feud with each other.[3]

Oswy's victories over the race which had formerly sheltered his youth and exile extended, out of all proportion, the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Northumbria, which had been originally established at Lindisfarne, in the centre of the kingdom, but which, since the restoration of Wilfrid, had been fixed at York, much further south. The crosier of

[1] "In hoc monasterio et ipsa et pater ipsius Oswi et pater matris ejus Edwinus et multi alii nobiles in ecclesia S. Petri sepulti sunt."—BEDE, iii. 24.

[2] "Perdomuit . . . gentem Pictorum maxima ex parte regno Anglorum subjecit."—*Ibid.*

[3] AUGUSTIN THIERRY, *Dix Ans d'Etudes Historiques*, p. 166.

Wilfrid thus extended not only over the two primitive kingdoms of Bernicia and Deira, but also over three provinces inhabited by the vanquished races, the Picts of Lothian, the Britons of Cumberland, and the mingled population of Britons, Scots, and Picts in Galloway.[1] His spiritual authority was recognised, at least nominally, by all the Celtic races, and it cannot be doubted that he used all his efforts to root out from among them, as from among the Northumbrians, the customs of their fathers. This also was, no doubt, one of the causes of that flood of resistance and discontent which was to sweep him away in the end.

Oswy was replaced on the Northumbrian throne by his son Egfrid. During the first years of the new reign, the concord between the king and the bishop was complete. The Picts, however, imagined that the youth of Egfrid would furnish them with an opportunity of regaining all that his father had taken from them. A general insurrection took place, seconded by all the auxiliaries which could be provided by the unconquered tribes of Caledonia. But Egfrid, a worthy successor of the valiant kings Oswy and Oswald, put himself at the head of a troop of cavalry, surprised his enemies, and exterminated them. We are not told whether religion had any part in this war, but it is plain that all the desires of Wilfrid were for the triumph of the Northumbrians by the language of his friend Eddi, who speaks of the Picts as brutes (though they were already Christians), describes as *bestial* their hatred of the Saxon yoke, and rejoices that two rivers were so choked with their corpses that it was almost possible to cross dryshod to attack the survivors and bring them again under the detested yoke which fifteen years later they succeeded in throwing off for ever.[2]

[1] "Wilfrido administrante episcopatum, nec non et omnium Northymbrorum, sed et Pictorum, quousque rex Oswin imperium protendere poterat."—BEDE, iv. 3. Cf. VARIN, memoir already quoted.

[2] "Tenero adhuc regno, populi bestiales Pictorum feroci animo sub-

Wilfrid must have been more embarrassed when Wulphere, his old and faithful friend, the protector of his disgrace, the husband of the gentle Ermenilda, too faithful to the traditions of his father Penda, tried in his turn to destroy the young Egfrid, and to render Northumbria again tributary to Mercia. But he soon decided for his hereditary chief, and joined his exhortations, in the name of the men of God, to those addressed by the Northumbrian Parliament to the king, to excite him to a most vigorous resistance, in which they triumphed.[1] Thus it was not Northumbria, but Mercia, which became tributary. Egfrid even seized a whole province to increase his kingdom, already so vast, and never allowed the Mercians to regain their independence till after the accession of Ethelred, brother of Wulphere, who had married the sister of the victor.[2]

Egfrid and Wilfrid were now both victorious: one over the enemies who had menaced his kingdom in the north and south; the other over the dissidents who occupied so large a portion of his diocese. During several years of a very temporary alliance, which was destined to end in the most bitter enmity, they combined all the power of their double authority to strengthen the edifice of Northumbrian royalty, and the just supremacy of Roman customs, over the vanquished Celts and the tributary Mercians. The young king showed great deference to the already celebrated prelate who had been the friend of his elder brother. Harvests of unusual abundance seemed to the people a pledge of celestial protection; and, as in the other parts of England, the harmony of the priesthood and royalty, under the auspices of

jectionem Saxonum despiciebant. . . . Statim equitatu exercito præparato . . . stragem immensam populi subruit, duo flumina cadaveribus mortuorum replens, ita . . . ut supra siccis pedibus ambulantes, fugientium turbas occidentes persequebantur, et in servitutem redacti populi . . . subjecti jugo captivitatis jacebant."—EDDIUS, c. 18.

[1] "Rex vero, consilio senum patriam custodire, ecclesias Dei defendere episcopo decente, in Deo confisus."—*Ibid.*, c. 19.

[2] BEDE, iv. 12. See the genealogical tables A and C.

a great bishop, seemed about to bring in an era of general peace and prosperity.[1]

The power of Wilfrid was used only for the good of souls, commencing with his own. He was surpassed by no one in those works of piety and mortification which the numerous temporal cares that oppressed him rendered yet more dear and yet more necessary. His nights passed in prayer, his days in studying the Holy Scriptures, perhaps edified and surprised his visitors and daily companions less than his fasts and abstinence. Saxon intemperance was confounded by the example of this powerful personage, the first in the country, except the king, who never permitted himself to drink more than the contents of a small phial, even when he was most exhausted, and after a long journey on foot under a burning sun. As to purity of body and soul, he believed that he preserved it by washing from head to foot in cold but consecrated water every night, summer and winter; and he preserved this habit—borrowed, perhaps unconsciously, from the austerities of Celtic monachism[2]—until he was forbidden to continue it by the Pope, on account of his age.[3]

His zeal for good was tempered, at this time at least, by great moderation. We are told expressly in considering this epoch of his life, that he had made himself dear to all the different races of his immense diocese, from the Humber to the Clyde. He multiplied, as much as possible, the priests and deacons necessary for the new parishes which were everywhere formed; but he reserved to himself the

[1] "Wilfrido episcopo ad austrum super Saxones, ad aquilonem super Britones et Scotos, Pictosque regnum ecclesiarum multiplicabatur. . . . Rex et regina simul Wilfrido obedientes facti, pax et gaudium in populis, anni frugiferi."—EDDIUS, c. 20, 18.

[2] See vol. iii. p. 126.

[3] "In conviviis tam abstinenter vivebat, ut numquam solus, quamvis parvissima phiala esset, potu consumpsisset, aut pro calore sitiens, aut. . . . In vigiliis et orationibus, in lectione et jejuniis quis similis ei? . . . Corpus in aqua benedicta nocturnis horis inclementer æstate ac hieme consuetudinarie lavavit."—EDDIUS, c. 20.

principal part in the fatigues and obligations of an apostolic ministry. He travelled, sometimes on foot, sometimes on horseback, in all weathers and all seasons, through his great province, to baptize, to preach even in the smallest hamlets, and, above all, to administer the rite of confirmation. Everywhere eager crowds pursued him and surrounded him, to obtain the benefit of the sacraments from his hands.[1] It was in one of these journeys that an incident occurred, at the village of Tiddafrey, which ought to be recorded here. While the ceremony of confirmation was going on, a poor mother, agonised by the loss of her first-born, made her way, weeping, through the crowd, with the little body of her child clasped to her heart. Having reached the first rank among the mothers, who pressed forward with their children, she presented her dead son to the bishop among the living, as if to be confirmed with them. Wilfrid, leaning over the child, perceived that it was dead. Then, comprehending how it was, he paused beside the desolate mother, and watched her a while in silence; upon which she threw herself at his feet, covering them with tears and kisses, and with a voice broken by sobs, adjured him to give her back her child. "Oh, holy man," she cried, "beware how you destroy the faith of a desperate woman! Help me to believe; restore my child to life, and baptize it. To God and to you it is still living. Courage! fear not to do it in the strength of Christ!" Wilfrid remembered the Canaanite of the Gospel. He knelt in prayer. Then placing his right hand on the heart of the child, he felt that it beat, and so restored it to life. After having thus raised it up, and baptized it, he returned it to the mother, exacting a promise that at seven years old she should bring it to him to be trained as a servant of God.[2] This miracle may or may not be

[1] "Omnibus gentibus charus et amabilis. . . . Inter sæculares undas fluctuantes moderate novas ecclesias gubernabat. . . . Equitante et pergente ad varia officia episcopatus sui."—EDDIUS, c. 20, 17.

[2] "Amaro animo susurrans, mœrore et onere fatigata . . . habens

believed; but who can refuse to be touched by the cry of the mother? and it is pleasant to find in Wilfrid that goodness of heart which God sometimes gives to great disputants and stern champions, and which alone renders them completely irresistible.

Let us add, to return to the dark reality of earthly things, that the mother, once in possession of her child, would not give him up, but fled with him to the Britons[1]—that is to say, to the enemies of the saint, probably in Cumbria, which was also in the diocese of Wilfrid, and from whence it was necessary for an officer of the bishop to bring the child back by force to his benefactor. He afterwards became a monk at Ripon, where he was called the bishop's son.

It is not easy to understand how Wilfrid should have needed unwilling recruits to fill his monasteries, when the number of monks who thronged to them is one of the best established facts in his history. Besides, the Northumbrian monasteries, like others, were schools, and many of the children received there enrolled themselves among their masters. Some important details in the life of our saint prove that the education given in monasteries was a true public education, and fitted youths for the world as well as for the cloister. It is expressly said that the Anglo-Saxons of high rank, the earls and thanes, were eager to confide their children to Wilfrid, to be brought up in his monastic establishments; and that at the end of their education they chose between the service of God and that of the king. If they decided on a secular and military life, Wilfrid sent them to the king fully armed, as he himself at fourteen years of age had appeared before Queen Eanfleda.[2]

primogenitum mortuum sub sinu pannis involutum. . . . Coram facie agnoscentis cecidit in terram . . . adjuravit eum audaciter . . . pedes deosculabatur, lacrymis irrigavit, . . . 'O sanctissime, noli orbatæ mulieris fidem extinguere, sed credulitatem meam adjuva: suscita eum et baptiza; tibi enim et Deo vivit: in virtute Christi ne dubites.'"—EDDIUS, c. 17.

[1] "Latentem sub allis Britonum," Eddi says.

[2] "Principes et sæculares viri nobiles filios suos ad erudiendum sibi

During all the course of his laborious episcopate, Wilfrid was moved, by the love of God and the love of souls, to make great efforts for the consecration, to the service of the Church, of those inexhaustible treasures of art which at that time found refuge alone in the monastic order. Music, above all, appeared to him an indispensable auxiliary of the new faith. He was not content with establishing within his monasteries a course of musical instruction, the teachers of which he had brought from the great school of Gregorian song at Canterbury; but with the help of Stephen Eddi, who has left us the story of his life, he spread this instruction through all the churches of the north of England. Thanks to him, the Anglo-Saxon peasants mingled with their labours as well as with their prayers the sweet and solemn chanting of Psalms in the Gregorian tones.[1] Thanks to him, Northumbria became a great centre of music, rivalling the school of Canterbury, in which the priests and the faithful renewed their musical education periodically, as at the fountainhead—a fact which must have associated the noble memory of Wilfrid with the solemn and consoling modulations of a popular and traditional liturgy.

But ecclesiastical architecture offered him a still wider field; and the results obtained by his exertions roused his contemporaries to an enthusiasm the echo of which has descended to us. Born with a taste for art and building,

dederunt, ut aut Deo servirent, si eligerent, aut adultos, si maluissent, regi armatos commendaret."—EDDIUS, c. 20.

[1] FABER, pp. 62, 66. "Sed et sonos cantandi in ecclesia, quos eatenus in Cantia tantum noverant, ab hoc tempore per omnes Anglorum ecclesias discere cœperunt . . . primusque magister Nortanhymbrorum ecclesiis Æddi . . . invitatus de Cantia."—BEDE, iv. 3. There is a second curious passage regarding other companions of Wilfrid: "Cantatorem quoque egregium, vocabulo Maban, qui a successoribus discipulorum B. papæ Gregorii in Cantia fuerat cantandi sonos edoctus, ad se suosque instituendos accersiit, ac per annos duodecim tenuit: quatenus et quæ illi non noverant, carmina ecclesiastica doceret: et ea quæ quondam cognita longo usu vel negligentia inveterare cœperunt, hujus doctrina priscum renovarentur in statum. Nam et ipse episcopus Acca cantator erat peritissimus."—BEDE, v. 19.

and also with a decided love of pomp and magnificence, he devoted all these natural dispositions to the service of God.[1] At the head of the monkish *cæmentarii*, whom he had brought from Canterbury, he began by thoroughly repairing the primitive cathedral of York, which had been founded by Paulinus, the first Roman missionary, and where Edwin, the first Christian king, with his daughter Eanfleda, had been baptized. Since the translation of the bishopric to Lindisfarne, this church had been like a place abandoned. The rain entered on all sides, and birds built their nests in it. Wilfrid, like a prudent architect, began his work by covering the roof with lead; he then put transparent glass in the windows; and finally caused the stones injured by damp to be washed and scraped. It seems even possible that he may have been the inventor of that white-washing which has since been so greatly abused;[2] after which he provided the restored cathedral with rich ornaments and a territorial endowment.

But he was much more prodigal towards his beloved monastery of Ripon, which he held by the gift of his first friend Alchfrid, and which had been the first centre of his independent and missionary action. He built there a vast basilica, dedicated to St. Peter, which excited universal amazement. Nothing had ever been seen equal to its lofty porches and columns of polished stone, nor, above all, to its magnificent Book of the Gospels, covered with plates of gold set with precious stones, which Wilfrid, for the good of his soul, had caused to be transcribed in letters of gold on purple vellum, and which he placed on the altar the day that the church was dedicated. On the day of this cere-

[1] "Crescebat ergo cum sæculari sumptu . . . pontifici nostro, amico sponsi æternalis, magis ac magis ardentissimus amor sponsæ."

[2] "Culmina corrupta tecti renovans, artificiose plumbo puro detegens, per fenestras introitum avium et imbrium vitro prohibuit; per quod tamen intro lumen radiabat Parietes lavans, secundum prophetam super lucem dealbavit."—EDDIUS, c. 15. "Ipse illas alba calce dealbavit."—GUILL. MALMESB., *De Gest. Pontif. Angl.*, l. iii. f. 148.

mony, in presence of King Egfrid, his brother, the neighbouring abbots, the ealdormen,[1] the earls, lords, and other principal Saxons, Wilfrid, standing before the altar, turned towards the people who filled the church, and solemnly declared his right to all the lands and churches, enumerating them by name, which had been conceded to him by the kings, with consent of the bishops and assembly of nobles of the country, and which were situated principally in that district which the British clergy had abandoned when flying before the swords of the Saxons. Thus his hostility against the Celtic Christians reappeared, even in the midst of this joyful solemnity, which ended in true Saxon fashion with a grand banquet, where the abbot of Ripon entertained all the guests, and which lasted three days and three nights.[2]

The magnificence displayed by Wilfrid at Ripon was yet again surpassed in an entirely new foundation at Hexham, situated much further north, in the heart of Bernicia, not far from the place where the sainted King Oswald had planted, for the first time, the cross on the soil of Northumbria, and commenced that struggle which had secured the greatness and independence of his country. It was there—near to the blood-stained cradle of Northumbrian Christianity, at the foot of the lofty wall built as a defence

[1] This is the title then given to the greatest Saxon lords, earls, or governors, more or less hereditary, of provinces,—from hence the modern word alderman. The ealdorman is translated in the Latin works of the time by the word *dux*, and his functions were similar to those of the lord-lieutenant of each English county, or of the supreme courts of the kingdom of Hungary, the constitution of which so faithfully reproduced most of the English institutions.

[2] "Basilicam polito lapide a fundamentis in terris usque ad summum ædificatam variis columnis et porticibus suffultum. . . . Inauditum erat sæculis nostris miraculum. . . . Invitatis regibus, cum abbatibus præfectisque et subregulis totiusque dignitatis personæ. . . . Coram regibus enumerans regiones quas ante reges . . . et in illa die cum consensu et subscriptione episcoporum et omnium principum, illi dederunt. . . . Consummato sermone, magnum convivium trium dierum eo noctium . . . lætificantes inierunt."—EDDIUS, c. 27.

against the Picts by the Emperor Severus, a little below the junction of the two branches of the Tyne, on a plain surrounded by undulating hills—that Wilfrid chose the site of a great monastery, destined, though he little suspected it, to be his own last asylum.[1] As he had dedicated his first abbey to St. Peter, he dedicated this to St. Andrew, the patron of the church in which he had first prayed on arriving at Rome, and from whence the first apostles of England had been sent. The surprise and admiration which his previous works had awakened became indescribable at the sight of the deep foundations dug, and immense stones placed in them for the basement of a church which, when finished—with its porches and pillars, its numerous naves and clerestories, its vast vaults underneath, its spiral staircases and galleries, and the imposing height of its spires—was regarded for two centuries as the most beautiful on this side the Alps, and as a kind of reproduction of Roman ambition.[2]

[1] This site is perfectly described in a recent publication of the Surtees Society, which contains a complete history of Hexham—*The Priory of Hexham, its Chroniclers, Endowments, and Annals*, by JAMES RAINE. Durham, 1864.

[2] "Cujus profunditatem in terra cum domibus (?) mirifice politis lapidibus fundatam, et super terram multiplicem domum . . . variis linearum anfractibus viarum, aliquando sursum, aliquando deorsum, per cochleas circumductam, non est meæ parvitatis explicare . . . neque ullam domum aliam citra Alpes montes, talem ædificatam audivimus."—EDDIUS, c. 21. "Ibi ædificia minaci altitudine murorum, erecta . . . multa proprio sed et cæmentariorum, quos ex Roma munificentiæ attraxerat, magisterio . . . nunc qui Roma veniunt allegant ut qui Hagulstadensem fabricam vident, ambitionem Romanam se imaginari jurent."—GUILLELM. MALMESB., *De Gest. Pontif.*, l. iii. f. 155. The successor of Wilfrid collected here a crowd of relics placed in shrines. Each triforium, formed by the intercolumniation of the edifice, was occupied by one of these shrines. This wonderful church, with all its riches, was burned by the Danes in 875. Nothing now remains but the crypt, of which a plan, extremely curious and complicated, will be found in the excellent *Introduction to the Study of Gothic Architecture*, by Mr. J. H. Parker, p. 11. This crypt is now covered by the beautiful Abbey Church, rebuilt in the twelfth century, the choir and transept of which have preserved their original beauty,

From the pinnacle of one of these towers, which was of unheard-of height, a young monk upon one occasion fell to the ground, breaking his arms and legs on the pavement. The rest believed him dead, and were about to carry him away in a coffin, when Wilfrid, in tears, stopped the bearers, collected the whole community, and said to them: "Pray all of you to God, with lively faith, that He would grant us the grace, which He gave to St. Paul, that He would restore this child to life, and that the enemy may not have such occasion to rejoice in our work." The general prayer was granted. The medical members of the community bound up the broken limbs of the young monk, who recovered slowly, and lived long. This incident proves that Wilfrid himself directed the works, and that the monks of the monastery mingled with the *cæmentarii* by profession whom Wilfrid had brought from Canterbury, or even attracted from Rome by the offer of large salaries.[1]

A hundred years later, an illustrious Northumbrian monk, who has been adopted by France and received into the number of her distinguished men, the great Alcuin, begged the sons of Wilfrid to reckon him among the number of their familiar friends, referring at the same time to the admiration excited, even beyond the seas, by the magnificent dwelling left to them by their founder. "Oh, noble posterity of saints," he wrote to them, "heirs of their honours and of their spotless life, inhabitants of that dwelling so marvellous in beauty, walk in the footsteps of your fathers,

the nave having been destroyed by the Scots in 1296. Those among my readers who are interested in architecture will forgive an old archæologist for presenting to their notice the text of Richard, prior of Hexham, who wrote about 1150, and who had seen the ruins of Wilfrid's church. It will be found in the Appendix to this volume, No. I.

[1] "Cum ædificarent cæmentarii murorum altitudines, quidam juvenis de pinna enormis proceritatis elapsus ad terram . . . ultima spiramina trahens jacebat. . . . Pontificis lacrymantis moratione . . . spiritum vitæ recepit et alligantes medici ossa confracta de die in diem melioratus est."—EDDIUS, c. 22. See preceding note in respect to the Roman workmen.

so that, passing from the splendour of your earthly home, you may be worthy, by the grace of God, to rejoin those from whom you are descended in the kingdom of eternal beauty."[1]

The land on which the new monastery of Hexham was built had been given to Bishop Wilfrid, not by the king, but by the queen, Etheldreda, whose personal estate it was, a part of her dowry.[2] It was the residence he preferred to all others, as much on account of the calm which he enjoyed there as from his tender affection for the giver.[3] It is now time to turn to this saint, whose life was so singular, whose influence over the destiny of Wilfrid was so marked, and in whom we must recognise the earliest, and for a long time the most popular, of all the English female saints.[4]

Etheldreda no doubt, like all the princes and princesses of the Anglo-Saxon dynasties, believed herself descended from Odin; but at least she was undoubtedly of the family of the Uffings, the royal race in East Anglia. Her father, King Anna, married a Northumbrian princess, sister of the abbess Hilda, and grandniece of Edwin, first Christian king of Northumbria. It was to avenge the death of this father, who had fallen under the sword of the sanguinary Penda, that King Oswy, her father-in-law, made war on the Mercians,

[1] "Ædilberto episcopo et omni congregationi in ecclesia sancti Andreæ Deo serventium, Alchuinus vestræ clientellus caritatis in Christo salutem . . . O nobilissima sanctorum progenies patrum! illorum honoris venerabilisque vitæ successores et pulcherrimorum habitatores locorum vestrorum, sequimini vestigia patrum: ut de his pulcherrimis habitationibus ad eorum, qui vos genuerunt, æternæ beatitudinis consortium, in cælestis regni pulchritudinem, Deo donante, pervenire mereamini."—ALCUINI, *Opera*, ed. Froben. 1777, t. i. p. 196.

[2] RAINE, p. xiv. This territory, known by the name of Hexhamshire, was twelve miles long and three broad.

[3] "Præ ceteris quibus præfuit ecclesiis, hanc creberius visitavit, devotius coluit."—ÆLRED, *De Sanctis Eccles. Hagustaldensis*, c. 1. "Tum ob amorem dilectissimæ dominæ suæ, tum propter secretiorem et quietiorem vitam."—RICARD. HAGUSTALD., *De Ant. et Moderno Statu ejusdem Ecclesiæ*, c. 2.

[4] Under the name of St. Audrey. This name, now quite fallen into disuse, is given by Shakespeare to one of his characters in *As You Like It*.

and not only delivered East Anglia, but also conquered and occupied Mercia. Etheldreda was the sister of Ermenilda, queen of the Mercians, who had so well seconded Wilfrid in the work of converting her people.[1] She had also another sister, married to that king of Kent who was so zealous for the destruction of idols.[2] And she was niece, through her mother, of Hilda, the holy and powerful abbess of Whitby, whose authority, though no doubt weakened since the victory gained by Wilfrid over her friends at Whitby itself, was, notwithstanding, always great throughout Northumbria.

Like all princesses whose history has fallen into the region of legends, the chroniclers boast of her precocious piety, the fervour and stainless purity of her early years. Nevertheless, she loved ornament; and on her deathbed still remembered the weight of the necklaces and jewels with which her delicate throat had been loaded.[3] These ornaments gave additional brilliancy to her great beauty, which excited, it is said, the passion of all the neighbouring princes.[4] The most ardent of these, the prince of the Gyrwiens, a Saxon colony established in the marshy country which separates East Anglia from Mercia, asked her in marriage, and obtained her from her father, two years before the death of that king on the field of battle.[5] Etheldreda, however,

[1] See vol. iii. p. 418.

[2] See vol. iii. p. 353. Cf. BEDE, iv. 22; and THOMAS, *Historia Eliensis*, i. 2, 25, ap. ACT. SS. O. S. B. sec. ii. A new edition of this historian is published by Stewart, London, 1848.

[3] "Merito in collo pondus languoris porto, in quo juvenculam me memini supervacua monilium pondera portare."—BEDE, iv. 19.

[4] "Ab ipsis infantiæ rudimentis sobrietati et pudicitiæ indulgens. . . . Accedunt plurimi formæ virginis excellentiam admirantes. . . . Innumeris ejus pulchritudo principibus complacebat: et venusta faciei ejus pulchritudo ad puellares promovebat amplexus."—THOM., *Eliens.*, § 4.

[5] "Postulatur a Tomberto principe . . . qui in amorem virginis totum animum informandum instituit. . . . Alligatur licet invita conjugali copulæ. Desponsata matrem Domini meruit imitari. . . . In quorum copula non commixtione carnis unum corpus, sed, ut creditur, in Christo unus erat animus. . . . Ignara maritalis negotii, indefessis precibus apud Deum obtinuit, ut illam custodiret immaculatam."—*Ibid.*

having resolved to follow the example of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and to consecrate herself wholly to God, resisted to the utmost the will of her father, and succeeded in preventing the consummation of her marriage during the three years that she passed with the tender and generous Tombert. He died; and the young widow supposed herself for ever delivered from the matrimonial yoke, and free to give herself up to Christ. But it was not so. Egfrid, the son and heir of the great king of Northumbria, the most powerful prince of the Anglo-Saxon nation, became in his turn enamoured of her. Her resistance was as vain as in the first instance. The entreaties of her uncle, who had succeeded her father as king of East Anglia, and those of all her relations, compelled her to a second marriage, which no doubt seemed to them a new and precious pledge of alliance between the two kingdoms.[1] The impassioned Egfrid bestowed on her, in full sovereignty, considerable possessions, of which the vast territory of Hexham, which she afterwards gave to Wilfrid, formed part.

When Wilfrid became bishop, he acquired at once, as has been seen, a great influence over the king, and the queen was not slow to show him still greater confidence and affection.[2] But what must have been the surprise and irritation of the young king, whom the powerful testimony of his contemporary Bede represents to us as very pious and highly beloved by God,[3] when he found that Etheldreda persisted, as in her former marriage, in keeping her virginity for God! Like the terrible Clotaire, the husband of St. Radegonde, a century previous, he found that he had married

[1] "Gaudebat solutam se esse in Christi libertate de jugo conjugii. . . . Ægfridus . . . inflammatur in amorem virginis, opes confert innumeras, dotesque spondet multiplices. . . . Principis petitio vehementius facta est . . . licet invita . . . adquievit unanimi parentum voluntati."—THOM., *Eliens.*, c. 4, 8.

[2] See above, p. 5. "Quem virgo regina præ omnibus in regno dilectum et electum habuerat."—*Id.*, c. 15.

[3] *Vita S. Cuthberti*, c. 24.

not a woman, but a nun.[1] But although he loved not less than Clotaire the wife who refused to belong to him, he respected and feared her more. She seemed to him more his lady and mistress than his equal and queen. Several years thus passed; the refusals of Etheldreda serving only to increase his passion. He then determined to apply to Wilfrid, well knowing what was the empire of the bishop over the conscience of Etheldreda, as well as over her heart, since he was the man for whom she had the greatest affection.[2] He offered him, as Wilfrid himself related to the Venerable Bede, large estates and much money as the price of the queen's consent to his wishes. Bede only sees in Wilfrid on this occasion a witness to the incorruptible virginity of the saint. But, if we are to believe the official panegyrist of Etheldreda, it was Wilfrid who encouraged her in her resistance, while at first pretending to second the views of the king, in order to preserve his favour. In his secret conferences with her, he showed her heaven as the reward of her perseverance. She made to him the vow of chastity, and he then counselled her to ask from the king a formal separation, that she might consecrate herself to God in a monastery. Egfrid at first refused this absolutely; but after long disputes—after twelve years of so strange and stormy a union, vanquished by the prayers and tears of her whom he ever loved with so faithful a passion—he suffered a kind of consent to be torn from him to the departure of his unconquerable wife.[3]

[1] "Dicebat se habere jugalem monacham, non reginam."

[2] "Acriores Ægfrido stimulos adjicit, et ad copulam virginis feroces illius animos vehementer incendit . . . (sed) reginam impudice non tetigit, neque constristavit . . . quoniam non ut reginam aut parem, verum tanquam dominam per omnia venerabatur. . . . Tamen optat ille debitum a conjuge."—THOM., *Eliens.*, t. i. 8, 9.

[3] Respect for truth obliges me to give entire the text on which this singular history rests. In the first place that of the contemporary Bede, whose curiosity, at first incredulous, may be remarked; next that of the monk of Ely, who did not write until five centuries after the death of Etheldreda, but who lived in the monastery which she had founded, and

She was no sooner furnished with this tardy and painful acquiescence in her wishes, than she hastened to Coldingham, to the great seaside monastery governed by Ebba, aunt of the king, and sister of his predecessors Oswald and Oswy. Wilfrid very soon followed, to give her the veil and black robe, which should henceforward prove her new position as a nun.[1] Soon after, however, Egfrid followed her to her retreat; unable to endure her absence and the sacrifice she had imposed on him, he came with the furious determination of reclaiming her, and asserting his rights. The Abbess Ebba saw that she could not resist the violence of her nephew; she advised the queen, therefore, to flee. Etheldreda accordingly left Coldingham on foot, disguised in the dress of a poor woman, and accompanied by two brave nuns of the monastery. It did not occur to her

surrounded with all the memorials which she had herself brought and left there, and which had passed from mouth to mouth until his time. "Data est regi præfato cujus consortio cum duodecim annis uteretur, perpetuæ tamen mansit virginitatis integritate gloriosa; sicut mihimet sciscitanti cum hoc an ita esset, quibusdam venisset in dubium beatæ memoriæ Wilfrid episcopus referebat; dicens se testem integritatis ejus esse certissimum: adeo ut Ægfridus promiserit se ei terras ac pecunias multas esse donaturum, si reginæ posset persuadere ejus uti connubio, quia sciebat illam nullum virorum plus illo diligere."—BEDE, iv. 19. "Vidit ejus assiduam cum beato præsule familiaritatem. . . . Hinc Dei præconem rex frustra fatigat præmiis. . . . Wilfridus voti virginei fautor existens, vigilantis animi sagacitate procurabat, ne qua femineæ mentis inconstantia virgo mutaret. . . . Dissimulavit provide, tanquam regi favens et desiderii sui efficaciam reginæ persuadendam pollicens; veritus ne, sicut contigit, ob rem hujusce modi offensum illum haberet. . . . Sic Dei virtute prædita, per consilium sancti præsulis nullatenus regi assensum præbuit; egitque vir beatus sua industria ut potius divortium quæreret. . . . Princeps, nec facile adquiescit graviterque dolendum se asserit, si aliquando contingat a conjuge dilecta ferre divortium, licet ei nunquam conjunctus esset more conjugatorum. Postulat iterum regina, fletibus et diutinis postulationibus tanto importunius insistit. . . . Rex tandem victus ipsius importunis precibus, licet invitus, tamem eam dimisit invincibilem." —THOM., *Elien.*, i. 9, 10. Let us add, finally, that Eddi, the disciple of Wilfrid, maintains a prudent and complete silence as to the intervention of his master in this delicate affair.

[1] "Accepto velamine sanctimonialis a Wilfrido."—BEDE, *l. c.*

to seek an asylum at Whitby, though the Abbess Hilda was her aunt. She must have known too well that that holy princess would encourage no enterprise in which Wilfrid had a share. She turned southward, through a thousand difficulties and adventures, towards the river which separated Northumbria from the rest of England, and having happily crossed that stream, she paused on the confines of her own country, East Anglia, in an estate which her first husband had given to her as her jointure.[1]

This long and fatiguing journey of the queen, disguised, and flying from her husband to bury herself in a cloister, touched deeply the imagination of the English people; and miraculous stories founded on it passed from mouth to mouth for ages, while they were also commemorated in the sculptured capitals and painted glass of the great monastic churches.[2] Pious pilgrimages were made to the promontory washed by the sea, on which, in the first stage of her journey, pursued by Egfrid, she took refuge with her companions, and round which the tide rose so high as to render it inaccessible for seven consecutive days, until the king, discouraged, abandoned the pursuit.[3] And the pilgrims pointed out to each other the spot where, travelling

[1] "In veste humili . . . latitando incessit. . . . Per innumera itinerum discrimina et labores diversos . . . ut possessionem propriam, quam a Tomberto primo sponso ejus, jure dotis . . . perpetuo possidendam acceperat."—THOM., *Eliens.*, c. 15. This author continually appeals to the traditional evidences by which he was inspired: "Hoc in Beda nequaquam invenimus, sed pro cunctorum usque nunc testimonio scribendum existimavimus. . . . Quicumque locum Coludi norunt, cum assertione hujus rei testes existunt. . . . Quæ ex priorum attestatione comperi, atque scriptura teste nosse contigit. . . . Res seniorum nostrorum relatione nobis tradita, quam omnis provincia in qua acciderat velut hesternum recitare solet et meminit."—C. 9, 11, 12, 13.

[2] For example, on the capitals of the beautiful cathedral of Ely, in 1342.

[3] "Mare suum alveum egrediens . . . locum, in quem sacræ virgines ascenderant, circumdedit, et sicut ab incolis loci accepimus, per septem continuos dies eas occuluit . . . solitos recursus obliviscens, quamdiu rex illic aut penes locum mirabatur."—*Ibid.*, c. 11. This rocky cape is still called, as in the time of Thomas, Colbert's Head.

on foot on a day of great heat, she fell asleep from fatigue on the open plain. Its position was marked by a majestic ash, the largest tree in the district, which was believed to have been the travelling staff which the royal traveller had thrust into the ground while she slept, and which she found at her waking already covered with verdure; an emblem of the great monastery in the shade of which she was destined to pass the rest of her days, and to shelter, among many others, her friend and protector Wilfrid.[1]

The lands she possessed in right of her first husband were very extensive, since they supported nearly six hundred families. Their position was almost that of an island, surrounded by fens, which could only be crossed in boats. This island was called Ely, or the Isle of Eels.[2] It is a name to be found on every page of the political and religious history of England.[3] Etheldreda built a monastery there, which grew into speedy greatness, and where many Anglo-Saxon virgins joined her, among whom were a number of princesses of her family, having at their head her sister, the queen of Kent. Mothers confided their daughters to her to educate. Even men, and among them many priests, selected her also for their guide and mistress in the spiritual life. Many of the officials of her household followed her example when she quitted the throne and the world to devote herself to God. The chief of these officials, who may be regarded as the queen's major-domo, was an East Anglian lord, named Owin, a man of faith and of amiable disposition, who had been attached to her

[1] "De somno evigilata . . . invenit baculum itineris sui . . . jam viridi amicta cortice fronduisse . . . facta est fraxinus maxima . . . quam ex nostris adhuc plures viderunt."—THOM. *Eliens.*, c. 13. This place was called, in Anglo-Saxon, *Ædeldrethestowe*, Etheldreda's Rest.

[2] "A copia anguillarum quæ in iisdem paludibus capiuntur."—BEDE, c. 1.

[3] After having been destroyed by the Danes, Ely became an abbey of monks, and was erected into a bishopric in 1108. Its cathedral, of which we shall speak later, is one of the marvels of Anglo-Norman architecture.

from her cradle, had accompanied her from East Anglia to Northumbria, and had no desire to remain in the world after her and without her. He abandoned his honours and possessions, and, putting on a poor man's dress, went with a mattock and axe on his shoulder, and knocked at the door of the monastery where Abbot Ceadda lived, at Lichfield in Mercia. "I come here," he said, "to seek, not rest, as some do, but work. I am not worth much for meditation or study, but I will do as much manual labour as you like; and while the bishop reads in his cell I will take care of the work outside."[1] Others of her servants joined Etheldreda at Ely, where she soon found herself at the head of one of those double communities of men and women, or rather of brethren and sisters, which played so important a part in history at the epoch of which we are speaking.[2]

She gave them, during the seven years she passed at their head, an example of all monastic virtues, and especially of zeal in fasting and prayer. Few details exist of this period of her existence, but the holiness of that life must have left deep traces in the memory of Anglo-Saxon Christians to have enabled it to triumph over time and human forgetfulness beyond that of any other woman of the race. Among her austerities, the greatest wonder was that so great a lady should wear nothing but woollen instead of linen garments, and that she took a bath only on the four

[1] "Ovini monachus magni meriti et pura intentione . . . eratque primus ministrorum et princeps domus ejus. . . . Securim atque asciam in manu ferens. . . . Non ad otium, ut quidam, sed ad laborem."—BEDE, iv. 3. Cf. BOLLAND., *die 4 Martii*. This Owin is the monk who attended Bishop Ceadda in his last moments. See vol. iii. p. 428. He himself is reckoned among the saints, and the Bollandists have consecrated an article to him in their volume i. of March. Bede relates the story of another of Etheldreda's officers—her cupbearer—who, after having been made a prisoner, and sold as a slave in the market at London to a Frisian, was bought back by the king of Kent, nephew of Etheldreda.

[2] THOM., *Eliens.*, c. 15, 18, 22, and 23.

great feasts of the year, and even then, after the rest of the community.[1]

Wilfrid never gave up his care of Etheldreda. As soon as he knew of her arrival at Ely he hastened thither.[2] It was he who instituted her abbess, who gave the veil to her nuns, and who regulated all that concerned the government and interests, temporal or spiritual, of the new community. He paid her frequent visits, and never ceased to give consolation and enlightenment to her for whom he must have felt more than ever responsible, since he had encouraged her to sacrifice the obligations of conjugal life to follow the path of supernatural virtue.

However touching and dramatic this history may be, it appears happily certain that no one in the Catholic Church would now authorise or approve the conduct of Wilfrid. It is not less certain that no one of his own time seems to have blamed him. Without any desire of judging him severely, it is evident that these events had no fortunate influence upon him. His life, hitherto agitated, but glorious and prosperous, became, after the consecration of Etheldreda, nothing but a tissue of trials and tempests. First of all, the intimate and fruitful union which had existed between him and the king of his country, was broken beyond remedy. Egfrid never pardoned him for his deceit, for having interfered in his domestic life, only to destroy its charm, and for having used his influence to encourage the wife whom he loved to desert him; and he long nourished his resentment in silence, waiting and preparing for the day when he might despoil him of his episcopal see.[3]

[1] BEDE, iv. 19.

[2] "Beatæ virginis non immemor, nec se a vicissitudine dilectionis illius excludens, ut eam in Ely descendisse cognoverat, festinus advolat."—THOM., c. 16. Cf. 15 and 19. "A quo ipsa plurimum regendi consilium et vitæ solatium habuit."

[3] "Nec deinceps confessorem Domini Wilfridum a secretis seu affectis ut antea coluit, sed iram diu tacito contra illum sub pectore gessit; et expectata hora, ob istius modi causam, eum de sede sui episcopatus expulit."—THOM., *Eliens.*, l. i. c. 11. Bede, the contemporary of Wilfrid,

But the direct instrument of the rupture between them and of the disasters of Wilfrid, was the second wife of Egfrid, she who, thanks to Wilfrid, and to him alone, had taken the place of St. Etheldreda on the throne, and in the heart of the sovereign of Northumbria. This princess, Ermenburga, was a sister-in-law of the king of the West Saxons. It was she, if we may believe the companion and biographer of Wilfrid, by whom the perfidious enemy of the Christian flock chose to work, according to his custom of employing the weakness of women to corrupt the human race.

This wicked Jezebel, continues our ardent musician, drew from her quiver the most poisoned arrows to pierce the heart of the king, and to provoke him to a furious envy of the great bishop. With the eloquence of hatred she represented to him the shameless pomp and luxury displayed on every occasion by the Bishop of York; his immense riches, his services of gold and silver, the increasing number of his monasteries, the vast grandeur of his buildings, his innumerable army of dependants and vassals, better armed and better clothed perhaps than those of the king. She pointed out to him besides how many abbots and abbesses either gave up to him during their lives the government of their communities, or solemnly constituted him their heir; so that the moment might be foreseen when all those estates, given by the generosity of the Northumbrians to the sanctuaries of the new religion, would become the appanage of one man.[1]

and who had questioned him with regard to the story of Etheldreda (iv. 19), simply mentions the rupture without alluding to its motives; he shows otherwise in all that regards the conflicts of Wilfrid with kings and bishops a singular reserve, very rare with him.

[1] "Consueta arma arripiens, vasa fragilia muliebria quæsivit. . . . Dè pharetra sua venenatas sagittas venefica in cor regis, quasi impiissima Jezabel, per auditum verborum emisit, enumerans ei eloquenter . . . innumerumque sodalium exercitum regalibus vestimentis et armis ornatum. . . . Namque pæne omnes abbates et abbatissæ cœnobiorum, aut sub suo nomine secum substantias custodientes, aut post obitum suum hæredem illum habere optantes voto voverunt."—EDDIUS, c, 23, 20. "Quod aureis et argenteis vasis sibi ministrari faceret."—GUILL. MALMESB., f. 148.

Such arguments could not but aggravate the resentment of a heart wounded by the desertion of a wife passionately regretted, and to whom another wife pointed out the way of vengeance.

The husband and wife thus decided upon the destruction of Wilfrid; but not daring to attack him directly, they had the art to engage the Archbishop Theodore in their plans, and to strike their enemy, the great champion of Rome, by the hand of the direct and supreme representative of Roman authority in England. Eddi distinctly accuses the primate of having been bribed by the king and queen of Northumbria.[1] It is repugnant to our minds to admit such an accusation against a saint placed in the Roman calendar side by side with St. Wilfrid. We can more easily believe that the archbishop suffered himself to be led away by an apprehension of the too great power of Wilfrid, and above all, by a perfectly legitimate desire to put in execution his project for augmenting and better dividing the English dioceses. It is also almost certain that he allowed himself to be influenced by a kind of Celtic reaction, the movers of which did not attempt to return to anti-Roman usages, but only to punish in Wilfrid the destroyer of their ancient ritual and their recent conqueror.

Accordingly, during one of Wilfrid's numerous absences, Theodore came to York, and using, or abusing, the supremacy with which the Pope had invested him, he deposed Wilfrid, and also divided the dioceses of York or Northumbria into three new dioceses. Nothing could be more significant of the spirit which animated him than his choice of bishops for

[1] "Ad auxilium suæ vesaniæ archiepiscopum Theodorum cum muneribus, quæ excæcant etiam sapientium oculos . . . invitaverunt. Venientes vero ad eos quid mente agerent in contemptu ejus patefacientes, et sine aliquo culpandi piaculo inique damnare consensit."—EDDIUS, c. 23. William of Malmesbury, in the twelfth century, repeats this account. The Bollandists do not admit that Theodore was corrupted, but do not hesitate to accuse him of culpable connivance with the enemies of Wilfrid. —*Act. SS.* vol. vi., Sept., p. 62.

these new dioceses, who were all monks taken from the ancient Celtic monasteries, who, while recognising Roman customs, had still repelled the Roman bishop.[1] One of these new sees naturally remained at York; there the archbishop placed Bosa, since venerated as a saint, whom he found in the community of Whitby,[2] and consequently of the school of the Abbess Hilda, always so hostile to Wilfrid. By a refinement of animosity, the capital of the second diocese was placed at Hexham, precisely in that great monastery which Wilfrid had created with such magnificence. The bishop placed there was the abbot of the Celtic novitiate of Melrose, that very Eata who had been superior of the Scottish community, formerly displaced from Ripon to make room for Wilfrid.[3] The third diocese, which comprehended that part of Mercia recently conquered by the Northumbrian king, was also confided to a Celtic monk, who had been the companion of Ceadda when he replaced Wilfrid after his first deposition by Oswy.[4] Finally, as if to add a touch of derision to violence, a fourth diocese was carved out, according to several authors, in the vast territories of Northumbria, having for its chief seat Lindisfarne, the sanctuary and asylum of the Celtic spirit. This miserable relic of his extinct greatness it was proposed to leave to Wilfrid, thus taking care to place him in the midst of his adversaries.[5]

[1] "Tres episcopos aliunde inventos, et non de subjectis illius parochiæ . . . inordinate solus ordinavit."—EDDIUS, c. 23.

[2] BEDE, iv. 12, 23. Bosa is honoured (November 2) in the English martyrology.

[3] See vol. iii. p. 384.

[4] BEDE, iii. 28, iv. 12. This monk was named Eadhæd. He was afterwards placed by Theodore at Ripon, in order to neutralise the influence of Wilfrid in his earliest foundation.

[5] It appears more probable, according to Bede, that this diocese of Lindisfarne was not created, or rather renewed, until 681; but supposing it to have been in 678, it is certain that Wilfrid did not then accept the government, as he did some years later. We must not, like Fleury, confound this diocese of Lindisfarne, situated in Bernicia, north of Northumbria, with that of Lindisfari, created by Theodore, and which comprehended the province of Lindsey (now Lincolnshire), a division of Mercia.

All these measures bore the unmistakable mark of a Celtic reaction; but the archbishop gave as his reason that the diocese was large enough to give occupation to four bishops, and that its revenues furnished sufficient support for three instead of ministering to the luxury of one.[1]

At the first report of this attempt on the rights of the Church and his own, Wilfrid hurried home, and summoned the king and the archbishop publicly to explain their motives for having thus despoiled him not only of his ecclesiastical authority, but also of the lands which he held as the gift of the reigning king, his father, and brother. "It is," he said to them, "mere robbery." The two potentates simply replied, "We have no crime with which to reproach you, but we will not change any part of the judgment we have delivered." "Then," replied Wilfrid, "I appeal to the judgment of the Holy See."[2] It was the first time that an appeal to Rome had been heard of in England; but Wilfrid recalled St. Paul's "I appeal unto Cæsar." The step he thus took was a prelude to those great appeals and solemn struggles which, after the Norman Conquest, stirred all the West, and gave so much celebrity

In 681, Theodore finished his work, and created—quite to the north of the country conquered by the Anglo-Saxons, on the banks of the Forth—a last diocese, which he placed in the monastery of Abercorn, and which was to comprise all the Picts subject to Northumbrian rule. The land to the north of the Humber was thus divided into five dioceses—York, Ripon, Hexham, Lindisfarne, and Abercorn; the twelve dioceses subject to the metropolis of York, of which Gregory had prescribed the foundation to Augustin, still lay far in the future. But Theodore did not intend to create in the north a rival metropolis to his own. On the other hand, he multiplied dioceses south of the Humber; he divided the immense dioceses of Mercia into six—*Lichfield*, Leicester, *Hereford*, *Worcester*, Sydnacester, and Dorchester, since transferred to *Lincoln*. Of these six, the four whose names are in italics still exist.

[1] "Prætendebat causam justitiæ ut inde tres alerentur episcopi, unde unus tumebat."—GUILL. MALMESB., f. 149.

[2] "Interrogans quid causæ esset, ut . . . prædonum more defraudarent. . . . Illi responderunt famosum verbum dicentes coram omni populo: Nullam criminis culpam in aliquo nocendi tibi abscribimus; sed tamen statuta de te judicia non mutabimus."

to the pontificates of St. Anselm and St. Thomas of Canterbury.

As he passed out of the royal assembly where he had thus signified his refusal to obey, he turned towards certain flatterers of the prince who were enjoying and laughing at his disgrace. "On this day next year," he said to them, "you who now laugh at my expense shall weep bitterly at your own." And in fact next year, on the very same day, all the people of York were tearing their hair and their garments in token of mourning, as the funeral procession of the young brother and heir of Egfrid passed through their city. This young prince, who was scarcely eighteen years of age, and already dear to the Anglo-Saxons, had been the guest of Wilfrid at the solemn dedication of Ripon: he perished in a war against the Mercians, the beginning of a series of defeats which lasted during all the remainder of the hitherto prosperous reign of Egfrid.[1]

The cowardly animosity of these courtiers against the haughty and intrepid prelate is, however, much less surprising than the fact that, incontestably, Wilfrid met with no aid and no sympathy among the great and holy churchmen who were his contemporaries. Not only did the illustrious Abbess Hilda, protectress of the Celtic ritual, remain always relentlessly, implacably hostile to him,[2] but not one of the abbots whom his example had imbued with the Roman and Benedictine spirit came to his succour; neither Benedict Biscop, who was as much Roman at heart, and by his numerous pilgrimages to Rome, as Wilfrid himself; nor the pious, humble, and austere Cuthbert, whose sanctity was already known in the very country and diocese

[1] "Adulatoribus dixit: Hoc anniversario die, qui nunc ridetis in meam pro invidia condemnationem, tunc in vestra confusione amare flebitis." —EDDIUS, c. 23. Cf. BEDE, iv. 21.

[2] "Ut putant sit quanta miseria involvat mortales, quod illi viri quos sanctissimos celebrat antiquitas, Theodorus, Berthwaldus, Johannes, Bosa, nec non et Hilda abbatissa digladiabili odio impetierint Wilfridum."—GUILL. MALMESB., f. 152. Cf. FABER, p. 88.

of Wilfrid, and nourished through many ages the popular devotion of northern England. Except his own personal followers, very numerous indeed, and warmly attached to him, all that Northumbria in which the Celtic apostles had wrought so many wonders, remained either hostile or profoundly indifferent. This indifference and hostility of the country, arising, no doubt, from an excessive susceptibility of national sentiment, is again apparent at a later date in the histories of Anselm and Thomas à Becket. It is a point of resemblance between these illustrious men and the first great bishop of the English race which must strike every observer.

The modern reader will not be less astonished at the ignorance of the Anglo-Saxon Church in the most elementary rules of canonical law as to the institution and immovability of bishops. When St. Wilfrid was superseded at York for the first time, without trial, before he had even taken possession, St. Chad accepted his see without hesitation; and other saints—Cuthbert, Bosa, and John of Beverley—afterwards followed his example, while the Metropolitan of Canterbury, himself inscribed in the Roman calendar, consecrated all these intruders. When the Holy See intervened on behalf of the law, its decrees met with but a tardy or equivocal acquiescence. But such causes of astonishment, too often awakened by the conscientious study of history, ought not to trouble sincere and serious minds. If the dogmas and morals taught by the Church have never varied, it has required many centuries to give to her discipline and government that form which now appears to us the only regular one. To expect in primitive times, and among young and restless nations, to find the monarchical concentration or uniform docility which, in our days, characterise the exercise of ecclesiastical authority, is to fall into the same error as those simple historians, lately so common among us, who mete out the royalty of Clovis or St. Louis by the measure of the monarchy of Louis XIV.

CHAPTER IV

JUSTICE DONE TO WILFRID AT ROME: IN ENGLAND HE IS DEPOSED, IMPRISONED, EXILED, AND RESTORED.—678–686.

Wilfrid himself carries his cause to Rome.—A storm lands him in Friesland, where he evangelises the people.—He thus becomes the first of the Anglo-Saxon apostles of Germany.—Generosity of the king of the Frisians and king of the Lombards, both of whom refuse to deliver him up to Ebroïn.—Wilfrid in Austrasia: Dagobert II.—Wilfrid at Rome: Theodore and Hilda denounce him to the Pope St. Agathon.—His cause is tried by a council at which the Pope presides.—He obtains justice; but the principle of the division of dioceses is maintained, and the authority of the primate confirmed.—Wilfrid hears at Rome of the death of Etheldreda.—He is present at the council against the Monothelites, and bears witness to the faith of all the Churches of the British Isles.—He returns to England with the Papal charter for Peterborough.—He is repulsed by the king and assembly of the Northumbrians, and then imprisoned.—Connivance of Archbishop Theodore.—Wilfrid refuses to treat with the king.—He is put in irons at Dunbar: afterwards delivered by the intervention of the Abbess Edda, of Coldingham, but exiled.—Obliged to leave Mercia and Wessex, where the brothers-in-law of Egfrid reign, he takes refuge among the Saxons of the South, whom he converts to Christianity.—He teaches them to fish with nets, and frees the serfs on the domains of his new abbey of Selsey.—His connection with the proscribed Ceadwalla, who becomes king of Wessex, and afterwards dies at Rome.—Theodore again disposes of the diocese of Wilfrid: St. Cuthbert is made Bishop of Lindisfarne.—King Egfrid ravages Ireland cruelly: in spite of the entreaties of Bishop Cuthbert he invades Caledonia, and perishes there.—Queen Ermenburga, informed by Cuthbert of the death of her husband, becomes a nun.—Consequences of the defeat of Egfrid.—The Saxon bishop of the Picts takes refuge at Whitby, where Elfleda, sister of Egfrid, had succeeded Hilda.—Archbishop Theodore acknowledges his faults towards Wilfrid: he wishes to choose him as his successor; writes in his favour to the king of the Mercians and to the Abbess Elfleda.—Connection of Elfleda with Bishop Cuthbert.—

Aldfrid, long an exile at Iona, becomes king of Northumbria.—Wilfrid is recalled and re-established in his diocese.—Storms raised by him at Lindisfarne, which he abandons to another bishop.—Death of Archbishop Theodore.

HAVING decided that he would himself carry his appeal to Rome, Wilfrid left Northumbria, accompanied by his friend the chorister Eddi, and by a numerous train of clergy and laymen, who never left him. He left behind thousands of monks, initiated by him into the rule of St. Benedict, and now in despair at finding themselves under the authority of new bishops strange to Benedictine traditions, and animated by a spirit totally opposed to that of their beloved superior.[1] His route towards the Continent led him through the kingdoms of Mercia and East Anglia, the princes and people of which were always favourable to him; and when he stopped at the great monasteries, at Peterborough, of which he regarded himself as one of the founders, and, above all, at Ely, where he had often dwelt, and where Etheldreda always received him as her bishop, she commissioned him to obtain for her at Rome one of those acts of privilege which were earnestly sought by monastic establishments as their most efficient safeguard against the usurpations and violences which menaced them on all sides.[2]

It was supposed by his enemies, who increased every day in number and bitterness, that he would take the ordinary route of pilgrims to Rome, landing in the neighbourhood of Boulogne at Etaples, and going through France. They therefore sent messages and gifts to the atrocious Ebroïn, who, stained as he was by the blood of St. Leger and many

[1] "Multa millia monachorum suorum sub manu episcoporum noviter ordinatorum, relinquens, mœrentes et flentes."—EDDIUS, c. 24.

[2] "Apud Ely cum beatissima Etheldretha morabatur, ubi tunc et quotiens necessitas poposcerat, quoad vixit, officii jura episcopalis administravit. . . . Monasterium per dilectum suum Wilfridum Romæ nutu apostolico corroborandum destinavit. . . . Accepit privilegium . . . ut optaverat et eum rogaverat mater insignis Etheldretha."—THOM., *Eliensis*, c. 15, 19.

other victims, still governed, as mayor of the palace, the provinces of Neustria and Burgundy. Knowing him to be capable of any crime, they begged him to lay hands on Wilfrid on his journey, rob him of all that he carried with him, and free them from the chance of his return.[1] But whether Wilfrid was warned of his danger, or whether he was simply guided by the west wind which rose while he was at sea—this wind saved his life, carrying him, and with him the first seeds of the Christian faith, to the low and marshy shores of Friesland.[2]

The Frisians then occupied all the north-east of Germany. They were a warlike, numerous, and formidable people, of whom mention will often be made in the after history of monastic missions. The Gospel was then unknown to them, and Wilfrid, who had been the beginner of so many things, had also the glory of opening the way to those Anglo-Saxon apostles of Germany whose long and glorious annals we have yet to unfold. Wilfrid, who was hospitably received by the king of the country and its inhabitants, had no sooner landed on the unknown coast than he took advantage of the kindness shown him to begin a new evangelical mission. With the self-devotion and enthusiasm natural to him, he forgot the grave personal interests which were leading him to Rome in his eagerness to give himself up to this new work. He remained there a whole winter, preaching daily, with the permission of the king, Adalgisus, and with a success which repaid his toil. The year proved more than usually abundant in fish and other provisions, and this the Frisians attributed to the new God who was preached to

[1] The similarity of name between Wilfrid and Winfrid, Bishop of Lichfield, must have been fatal to the latter. Having been deposed by the metropolitan Theodore, "per meritum cujusdam inobedientiæ," he also was going to France, and perhaps to Rome, when the satellites of Ebroïn fell upon him, killed his companion, and left him naked, "errore bono unius syllabæ seducti," says Eddi, who judges of good and evil only as they affect the interests of his hero.—Cf. BEDE, iv. 3, 6.

[2] "Flanto Favonio pulsus est."—BEDE, iv. 19. Cf. EDDIUS, p. 25.

them.[1] Nearly all their chiefs were baptized, with many thousands of the people.

Meantime Ebroïn was on the watch, with no inclination to let the rich prey of which he had been informed escape from him. Having heard of Wilfrid's residence in Friesland, he sent messengers to the king with very friendly letters, in which he promised him by oath a bushel of gold coins if he would send him Bishop Wilfrid alive, or even his head. Adalgisus had all the repugnance to secrecy which had been noticed by Tacitus among the princes of Germanic race, who loved to discuss their affairs at feasts, since at such a moment the heart is most frank and open, most prone to generous impulses, and least apt to dissimulate.[2] The king of the Frisians accordingly collected all his people at a great banquet, together with his different guests; on the one side the emissaries of Ebroïn, on the other Wilfrid and his followers, amongst whom was Eddi, who has described the scene. After the banquet, he caused the letter of the powerful minister of the Franks to be read aloud. When this was finished he took the letter, tore it up, and threw the pieces into the fire, saying to those who had brought it, "Go and tell your master what you have seen, and add that I have said, 'Thus may the Creator tear, destroy, and consume the perjurer and traitor!'"[3] It is evident that chivalry was just bursting from the bud among these new Christians. Wilfrid, however, could only stay to

[1] "Doctrina ejus secundum paganos bene adjuvavit, erat enim in adventu eorum eo tempore solito amplius in piscatione et in omnibus frugifer annus."—EDDIUS, c. 25.

[2] "Plerumque in conviviis consultant: tanquam nullo magis tempore aut ad simplices cogitationes pateat animus aut ad magnas incalescat. . . . Deliberant dum fingere nesciunt."—*De Moribus Germaniæ*, c. 22.

[3] "Modium plenum solidorum aureorum. . . . Rex, præsentibus nobis, et nuntiis coram populo suo in palatio epulantibus, omnibusque audientibus. . . . Enuntiate domino vestro hoc modo me dicentem: Sic rerum Creator regnum et vitam in Deo suo perjurantes, factumque nullum non custodientes scindens destruat, et consumens in favillam devellat!"—EDDIUS, c. 26.

reap a first and rapid harvest. He had left in his monastery at Ripon a young Northumbrian, brought to him in infancy by his mother, whom he had carefully educated for thirteen years. And it was for this child, a faithful disciple of the great exile, since venerated by the Churches of England and Germany under the name of Willebrord, that God reserved the glory of bringing permanently into the ranks of Christianity this warlike nation.[1]

Wilfrid resumed his journey towards Rome in spring, crossing Austrasia, where the throne was occupied by a prince who had occasion to know the generous hospitality of the abbot of Ripon. This was Dagobert II., grandson of the first king of that name, who, dethroned in infancy by Grimoald, mayor of the palace, was sent secretly to Ireland, where he found refuge in a monastery; but when in 673 the Austrasian nobles determined to escape the yoke of Ebroïn, who was already master of Neustria and Burgundy, they recalled the tonsured prince whose brilliant youth, according to travellers, blossomed in a Hibernian cloister. It was to Wilfrid that they addressed themselves for the restoration of the royal exile; and it was Wilfrid who, after having magnificently received and entertained him at Ripon, sent him on his way to Austrasia with large presents and a great escort.[2] Dagobert showed his grati-

[1] Wilfrid always maintained his connection with Friesland. A curious story told by Bede (iii. 13), which describes the veneration of their national saint, King Oswald, introduced by the Northumbrian missionaries, seems to indicate that Wilfrid himself visited the country a second time in one of his later voyages with Willebrord and his successor Acca. M. Albertingk Thym, in his recent and curious account of St. Willebrord, does not resolve this question. But the Bollandists (vol. vi. Sept., p. 68) decide that Wilfrid, in returning from Rome twenty years after his second voyage, passed through Friesland, and that he may then have been accompanied by Willebrord and Acca. Fourteen years after his first stay in Friesland in 692, it was to Wilfrid that they sent Bishop Swidbert, another Saxon missionary, to be consecrated.—BEDE, v. 11.

[2] "Amici et propinqui ejus viventem et in perfecta ætate florentem a navigantibus audientes, misere nuntios, ad B. Wilfridum, petentes ut eum

tude not only by giving him an affectionate reception, but by his entreaties to Wilfrid to accept the bishopric of Strasbourg, then vacant, and the most important in the kingdom.

Wilfrid, however, refused, and pursuing his route, arrived in Lombardy, where he was most hospitably received by Berchtaire, king of that country.[1] There, also, he had been anticipated by the enmity of his countrymen, and once more the great bishop owed his life to the honour and good faith of a barbarian, but already Christian, prince. He said to Wilfrid, "Your enemies have sent to me from England, with promises of great presents if I will prevent you by violence from proceeding to Rome; for they treat you as a fugitive bishop. I have replied to them thus: 'I was myself exiled from my country in my youth, and lived with a king of the Avares, who was a pagan, and who swore before his idol not to deliver me up to my enemies. Some time afterwards they sent to offer this pagan king a bushel of gold if he would give me up to them. He refused, saying that his gods would break the thread of his life if he broke his oath. With better reason I, who know the true God, will not lose my soul were it to gain the whole world.'"[2] Having said this he gave Wilfrid and his people an honourable escort which guarded them all the way to Rome.

Thus on the north and south of that mass of Germanic nations just touched by Christianity, there flashed out at Wilfrid's touch sparks of that generous loyalty which afterwards developed into Christian honour, and the lofty ideal, ever inaccessible yet ever desired and pursued, of chivalry.

de Scotia et Hibernia ad se invitasset et sibi ad regem emisisset."—EDDIUS, c. 27.

[1] It is apparent from the introduction to the text of Eddi published by Mabillon, that the latter and Adrian de Valois take this to prove that the country described by Eddi as *Campania* was no other than Lombardy.

[2] "Fui aliquando in die juventutis meæ exsul de patria expulsus, sub pagano quodam rege . . . qui iniit mecum fœdus in deo suo idolo. . . . Ego quanto magis, qui Deum meum scio, animam meam pro totius mundi lucro in perditionem non dabo."—EDDIUS, c. 27.

Wilfrid may be congratulated on having been one of the first to awaken in the history of our forefathers the premonitory signs of this magnificent dawn.

At the moment when Wilfrid arrived at Rome for the second time—returning persecuted but famous to the city which he had left twenty years before obscure and unknown —the chair of St. Peter was occupied by a Sicilian monk named Agathon: since the time of St. Gregory the Great, all the monasteries of Italy and Sicily followed the rule of St. Benedict, and consequently, we cannot doubt that he was a Benedictine. Accordingly it was natural that he should be favourably disposed towards the Bishop of York, in whom he found at once the propagator of Benedictine rule and the champion of Roman authority. But he also showed great consideration for Wilfrid's antagonist, Archbishop Theodore, whom he had just summoned to Rome by a special envoy, for the council convoked against the Monothelite heresy. Theodore did not obey the summons of the Pope, but he sent a very exemplary monk named Coënwald with letters full of violent accusations against Wilfrid.[1] Messengers charged with a similar commission arrived from the abbess of Whitby, St. Hilda, still embittered against him who had won the day in the great struggle carried on in the very bosom of her monastery fifteen years before. This singular intervention of the great abbess, which is recorded and proved by a pontifical rescript a quarter of a century after the event,[2] shows at once the great place she held in the English Church, and the intensity of her resentment against Wilfrid.

The Pope confided the judgment of the affair to an assembly of fifty bishops and priests collected in the basilica of the Saviour, at which he himself presided. The companion of

[1] "Modestæ religionis monachus. . . . Accusationes scriptas deferens et amaritudine delationis verbis immitibus."—GUILL. MALMESB., f. 149.

[2] See the letter of Pope John VI. quoted by Eddius (c. 51), written to the kings of Northumbria and Mercia in 705.

Wilfrid has left us a kind of official account of the last session of this assembly, which shows, under the profusion of superlatives then used in all the documents of the Roman Court,[1] an indulgent sympathy for both the rivals, together with the moderation and impartiality natural to the Head of the Church.

The cardinal-bishops of Ostia and Porto made a report to this assembly, equally founded upon the memorials sent by Theodore and others, in which Wilfrid was spoken of as a fugitive bishop, and on those which Wilfrid himself produced for his defence. They concluded thus:—"All being considered, we do not find him convicted canonically of any crime which merits deposition; on the contrary, we perceive that he has preserved great moderation, and has excited no sedition by which to regain his position. He has contented himself with protesting in presence of the other bishops his brethren, and has then had recourse to the Holy See, where Christ, who purchased the Holy Church by His blood, has founded the primacy of the priesthood." The Pope then said, "Wilfrid, Bishop of York, is at the door of the hall of our secret deliberations with his petition—let him enter." The bishop being introduced, begged that his prayer should be again read in full assembly. It was expressed in terms equally able and touching: "I, Wilfrid, the humble and unworthy bishop of the Saxons, have taken refuge here as in an impregnable fortress. I have climbed, by the grace of God, to this apostolic summit, from whence flows to all the churches of Christ the rule of the holy canonical law; and I have a hope that justice will here be rendered to my humbleness. I have already explained, *viva voce* and in writing, how, without being convicted of any fault, I have been expelled from the diocese which I have governed for

[1] The Pope is always described as "sanctissimus et ter beatissimus," and Theodore as "sanctissimus;" Wilfrid is only named with the epithet "Deo amabilis." The violent Eddi himself is won by this example, and while he transcribes this document he treats Theodore as a saint, and his envoy Coënwald as "religiosus monachus."

ten years; and how they have put in my place, not one bishop only, but three bishops, contrary to the canons. I do not dare to accuse the most holy Archbishop Theodore, because he has been sent by the Church. I submit myself here to your apostolic judgment. If you decide that I am no longer worthy to be a bishop, I humbly accept the sentence; if I am to reclaim my bishopric, I shall obey equally. I implore you only to expel, by the authority of this council, the usurpers of my diocese. If the archbishop, and the bishops my brethren, see fit to augment the number of bishops, let them choose such as I can live amicably with, and let them be elected with the consent of a council, and taken from the clergy of their future dioceses, so that the Church may not be ruled from without and by strangers. At the same time, confiding absolutely in apostolic justice, I shall obey implicitly its decrees."

After this speech, the Pope congratulated Wilfrid on his moderation and humility. Then the council decreed that Wilfrid should be restored to his see; that those who had replaced him should be expelled; but that the archbishop should ordain bishops with the title of coadjutors, bishops chosen by Wilfrid himself in a council assembled for that purpose. All this was commanded under pain of interdict, deposition, and anathema, against whosoever might oppose this decree, whether bishop, priest, deacon, monk, layman, or even king.[1]

[1] "Agatho . . . dicit: 'Wilfridus Deo amabilis episcopus . . . præ foribus nostri secretarii moratus, ad nostrum secretarium juxta suam postulationem cum petitione, quam secum adfere licitus est, ammittatur.' Wilfridus . . . dixit: 'Deprecor vestram pontificalem Beatitudinem ut meæ humilitatis petitionem excipi coramque relegi præcipiatis . . . Quid acciderit ut Theodorus sanctissimus me superstite in sedem quam . . . dispensabam . . . ordinaret episcopos, omittere magis quam flagitare pro ejus Dei viri reverentia condecet; quem eo quod ab hac apostolica sede directus est, accusare non audeo.' . . . Si placuerit archiepiscopo et coepiscopis meis ut augeatur numerus episcoporum, tales eligant de ipso clero Ecclesiæ, quales in synodo placeat congregatis episcopis, ut non a foris et alienis dominetur Ecclesia. . . . Si quis proinde contra horum statutorum

This sentence was a most wise and legitimate decision; for, while giving full satisfaction to that justice which had been outraged in the person of Wilfrid, it enforced, on the terms he had himself accepted, the evidently reasonable principle of the division of his overgrown diocese.

Besides this, the same assembly, probably in the same session, rendered full justice to the apostolic zeal of Archbishop Theodore, by prescribing a new arrangement of bishoprics, so that the metropolitan might have twelve suffragans, canonically elected and ordained, of whom none should interfere with the rights of his neighbour. It also sanctioned the prohibitions decreed by the archbishop, who forbade ecclesiastics to bear arms, and to mingle in secular amusements with female musicians and other profane persons. Finally, the Pope and the council charged Theodore to complete the work of St. Gregory and St. Augustin, by convoking an assembly, wherein the kings, princes, nobles, and leaders of the country might confer with the prelates, and where they could provide for the exact observance of apostolic rules. It was also recommended to him to hold assemblies of this kind as frequently as possible, in order to provide, in concert with the faithful and the wisest men of the kingdom, for those measures most advantageous to the Church and people of God.[1]

synodalium decreta ausu temerario obsistere tentaverit . . . ex auctoritate B. Petri . . . eum hac sanctione percellendum censemus, ut, si episcopus est . . . sed ab episcopali ordine destitutus, et æterni anathematis reus; similiter si presbyter . . . si vero clericus, monachus vel laicus cujuslibet ditionis, vel rex: extraneus efficiatur et corpore et sanguine Christi: nec terribilem ejus adventum dignus appareat conspicere."—EDDIUS, c. 28, 30. It will be seen that this decree of the council does not repeat, with regard to kings and other powerful lay personages, the threat of deposition, together with excommunication, contained in the celebrated diploma of St. Gregory the Great cited above, vol. ii. p. 44.

[1] "Armis non utantur, nec citharedas habeant, vel quæcumque symphonia, nec quoscumque jocos vel ludos ante se permittent. . . . Ut ipse . . . cum universis præsulibus, regibus, principibus, universis fidelibus, senioribus, majoribusque natu totius Saxoniæ, publicam œcumenicamque faciant synodum. . . . Ut quidquid sanctus Theodorus cum sapientibus

Wilfrid made no haste to quit Rome, after having obtained justice. He remained there several months, and occupied himself among other matters in obtaining pontifical charters for two English monasteries which, though situated beyond the limits of his diocese, lay very near his heart—those of Peterborough and Ely. He had just succeeded in respect to Ely, and expected to carry back a deed of privilege such as the Abbess Etheldreda had requested of him, when he received news of the death of this sainted queen, whose friend and spiritual father he had been, and whose supernatural resolution had been the first cause of his pilgrimage as an exile and accused man to Rome. Probably of all the Christian souls of his own country, hers was the one most tenderly and closely united to his. All that he had suffered through her, and in her cause, must have rendered her peculiarly dear to his generous heart. Etheldreda died young, a victim to one of the contagious diseases which were then so frequent. She had predicted her own death, as well as the number of those brothers and sisters of her community who would follow her to the grave. Three days before her death she was obliged to submit to a painful operation in the throat; she rejoiced at it. "God," she said, "has sent me this suffering to expiate the frivolity of my youth, the time when I remember to have worn with so much pleasure necklaces of pearls and gold on this neck now so swollen and burned by illness." At the last moment, surrounded by the brothers and sisters of her numerous community in tears, she spoke to them at length, imploring

et fidelibus et viris religiosis in Anglorum provinciis, totis ecclesiis et universo populo Dei ibidem positis profuturum melius ac religiosius invenire potuissent . . . laborare atque transcribere." — *Concilia*, ed. COLETTI, t. vii. p. 603. The Bollandists (vol. vi. Sept., p. 69), contrary to the opinion of P. Pagi and the editors of the Collections of Councils, believe that the council where Pope Agathon gave the decrees relative to Archbishop Theodore was distinct from that which did justice to Wilfrid a year later. While accepting their chronology, we do not think that their arguments ought to prevail against the ancient opinion, founded on the text of the Acts themselves.

them never to let their hearts rest on the earth, but to taste beforehand, by their earnest desires, that joy in the love of Christ which it would not be given to them to know perfectly here below.[1] She carefully directed that they should bury her, not in a stone vault like a queen, but in a wooden coffin, and among the simple nuns.[2]

The death of Etheldreda must have saddened Wilfrid's stay at Rome, where, however, he was still treated with confidence and distinction by the Pope. He was admitted to the council of one hundred and twenty-five bishops assembled under the presidency of Agathon, to name deputies for the sixth general council which was about to be held at Constantinople for the condemnation of the Monothelite heresy, a heresy which recognised but one single will in the Son of God made man. For half a century this heresy had troubled the Church; it had been adopted by various

[1] "Scio certissime quia merito in collo pondus languoris porto, in quo juvenculam me memini supervacua monilium pondera portare: et credo quod ideo me suprema pietas dolore colli voluit gravari, ut sic absolvar reatu supervacuæ levitatis: dum mihi nunc, pro auro et margaritis, de collo rubor tumoris ardorque promineat."—BEDE, iv. 19. "Monens eas ut animum de supernis nunquam deponerent et suavem cibum cælestis jucunditatis in Christi amore suspirando gustarent, quem adhuc in carne agentes perfecte apprehendisse non poterant."—THOM. ELIENSIS, c. 21.

[2] In spite of these directions, sixteen years after her death, in 695, her sister, who had succeeded her as abbess of Ely, wished to place her in a mausoleum of white marble, richly carved, which she took from the ruins of the Roman city of Granchester, near Cambridge. On this occasion it was seen that her body had preserved all its freshness; she seemed to sleep; the surgeon who had opened the tumour in her neck, and who was present at this exhumation, recognised the wound he had made: "Pro aperto et hiante vulnere cum quo sepulta erat, tenuissima cicatricis vestigia parerent." This miraculous preservation appeared to all a decisive proof of the incorruptible virginity which she had guarded throughout her life, even to Bede, who celebrated the translation of the saint's body in an elegy which he has inserted in his History, and in which classic recollections are mingled with those of the martyrology to honour the Anglo-Saxon queen:—

"Bello Mars resonet, nos pacis dona canamus;
Carmina casta mihi, fœdæ non raptus Helenæ;
Dona superna loquar, miseræ non prælia Trojæ."

Byzantine emperors, and had thirty years before led the holy Pope, Martin I., to the most painful of martyrdoms. In the synodical letter which these hundred and twenty bishops, chiefly Italians, wrote to the emperors, in the name of all the provinces of the West, is found this passage: "You have ordered us to send you wise and virtuous ambassadors. There is no secular eloquence among us. Our lands are desolated by the fury of contending races; there is nothing but battles, inroads, and pillage. In the midst of these barbarians, our life is full of anguish; we live by the labour of our hands, for the ancient patrimony of the Church has been, little by little, devoured by various calamities. Our faith is the only patrimony which remains to us; to live for it is our glory; to die for it our eternal advantage." After having described the Catholic and Apostolic faith, held by all under the terms defined by the Holy See, they add: "We are late in replying to your appeal, because many of us live far away, and even on the coasts of the great Ocean. We had hoped that our colleague and co-servitor Theodore, archbishop and philosopher of the great island of Britain, would come with the bishops of his country, as well as of yours and of other places, so that we might write to you in the name of our whole council, and that all may be informed of what takes place, for many of our brethren are in the midst of barbarous nations, Lombards, Sclavonians, Goths, and Britons, all very curious touching the faith, and who being all agreed with us as to the faith, would become our enemies if we gave them any subject of scandal."[1]

This letter, signed by the Pope and the hundred and twenty-five bishops, was signed also by Wilfrid as represen-

[1] "Sola est nostra substantia fides nostra: cum qua nobis vivere summa gloria est; pro qua mori lucrum æternum est . . . Sperabamus de Britannia Theodorum confamulum et coepiscopum nostrum, magnæ insulæ Britanniæ archiepiscopum et philosophum . . . exinde ad nostram humilitatem conjungere."—*Concilia*, ed. COLETTI, t. vii. p. 707, 714.

tative at the council of the British bishops,[1] although those bishops had given him no commission on the subject; but he felt himself authorised to bear this witness to the faith of the British Church. His confidence was the better justified, since in the same year Archbishop Theodore held a national council at Hatfield, where all the bishops of England made their solemn profession of faith, and declared that they received the four general councils and the council of Pope Martin against the Monothelites.[2] It seems even that Wilfrid undertook to guarantee not only the faith of the Anglo-Saxon bishops, but also of all the Churches scattered in the north of Great Britain and in Ireland, among the Scots and Picts. Thus the Celtic Christians, whom he had so persecuted and opposed as to peculiar rites, inspired him with no doubt as to their unity of belief on all points which related to the faith; and he did not hesitate to answer for them before the Pope and the universal Church.[3]

When Wilfrid at last made up his mind to return to England, new dangers met him on the way. He expected to meet again his friend and host, King Dagobert, in Austrasia, but that prince had just fallen a victim to a plot fomented by Ebroïn, one of whose creatures, an unhappy bishop,[4] lay in wait for the great Anglo-Saxon with a band

[1] "Ego Wilfridus, humilis episcopus sanctæ Ecclesiæ Eboracensæ insulæ Britanniæ, legatus venerabilis synodi per Britanniam constitutæ, in hanc suggestionem quam pro apostolica nostra fide unanimiter construximus, similiter subscripsi."—Cf. GUILL. MALMESB., f. 150. FLEURY, *Hist., Ecclésiast.*, l. xl. c. 6, 7.

[2] BEDE, iv. 17.

[3] This is the result of another signature of his, different from that which we have quoted, though given in the same council, appealed to by him, and admitted by Pope John VI. twenty-five years later. It is thus expressed: "Ego Wilfridus . . . cum aliis cxxv. episcopis in synodo in judicii sede constitutus, et pro omni aquilonali parte, Britanniæ et Hiberniæ insulis quæ ab Anglorum et Britonum, nec non Scotorum et Pictorum gentibus incolantur, veram et catholicam fidem confessus est, et cum subscriptione sua confirmavit."—BEDE, v. 19. EDDIUS, c. 50.

[4] Mabillon thinks this was Waïmer, Duke of Champagne, made Bishop of Troyes by Ebroïn, to reward his services against St. Leger.

of armed men, with the intention of robbing him, killing or selling into slavery all his companions, and delivering him to the implacable Ebroïn. This bishop reproached Wilfrid with having sent back from exile the tyrant Dagobert, from whom they had just freed themselves. "I only did," said Wilfrid, "what you yourselves would have done if an exile of our race and of royal blood had come to you to seek an asylum." "You are more just than I am," replied the bishop; "pass on your way, and may God and St. Peter be your aid!"[1]

When Wilfrid arrived in England, his first step before proceeding to his diocese in Mercia was to give to King Ethelred the charter he had obtained from the Pope, with the sanction of the hundred and twenty-five bishops of the council at Rome, in favour of the great abbey of that kingdom and of central England at Peterborough, the foundation of which he had approved fifteen years before, and to which he now put the final crown. The deed of Pope Agathon, addressed to the king of Mercia, to Archbishop Theodore, and to Bishop Sexwulf, who had been the first abbot of the *Burg* of St. Peter, conferred on the monastery an exemption from all ordinary charges and jurisdiction. In this document the king was recommended to be the defender of the community, but never its tyrant; the diocesan bishop to regard the abbot as his assistant in the evangelical ministry; the metropolitan to ordain in his own person the abbot elected by the community. This charter was sanctioned and signed by the King, the Queen, Archbishop Theodore, and his friend Abbot Adrian; and finally by Wilfrid himself, with this formula, "I, Wilfrid, on my way to reclaim, by apostolical favour, my see of York, being witness and bearer of this decree, I agree to it."[2]

[1] "O rectissime episcope, quid aliud habuisti facere, si exsul de genere nostro. . . . Video te justiorem me esse."—EDDIUS, c. 31.

[2] "Ego Wilfridus, apostolico favore repetens sedem Eboracensem, testis et relator hujus sanctionis votivæ assentior." I follow the text given by

But the confidence which Wilfrid thus expressed was singularly misplaced. We now reach the most strange incident of all his stormy life. Having returned to Northumbria, conformably to the instructions of the Pope and the bishop, he humbly presented to King Egfrid, who had expelled him, that which he regarded as the standard of victory, namely, the decree of the Holy See and Council of Rome, with the seals and signatures of all the bishops. The king convoked the assembly of nobles and clergy, and caused the pontifical letters to be read in their presence. Upon this there arose an ardent opposition. The authority of the Pope or the Council was not disputed, but there were cries on all sides that the judgment had been bought. By the advice of the whole council, and with the express consent of the intruded bishops, the king condemned Wilfrid to an ignominious imprisonment of nine months. He was at once taken prisoner; nothing was left to him but the clothing he wore; his servants and adherents were dispersed, and his friends strictly forbidden to visit him. Queen Ermenburga, his old and pitiless enemy, took from him his *Chrismarium* or reliquary which he wore round his neck, and took possession of it, having it always hung in her chamber or in her carriage when she travelled, either as a trophy of her victory or from that sincere but savage devotion which at times took such strange forms, and was the cause of such dishonest actions. This done, the noble bishop was confided to one of the king's officers, Count Osfrid, who removed him so that none of his friends might know where he was, and shut him up in a cell which during the day was scarcely penetrated by a few feeble rays of light, and where at night he was not permitted to have a lamp.[1]

Dugdale (i. 67), which P. Pagi considers free from the interpolations and anachronisms of that found in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (anno 680); the Bollandists, however, regard it as tainted with error.

[1] "Vexillum victoriæ ferens, hoc est, apostolicæ sedis judicium . . .

It is comprehensible that a barbarous Saxon king, full of pride and cupidity, and a passionate and angry woman, should give themselves up to such excesses against a bishop whose wealth, power, moral influence, and fearless character, excited their jealousy. But what was St. Theodore doing meanwhile? He, so eager, three years before, to make himself the instrument of the king of Northumbria's violent deeds, where was he now when the repairing of his error was in question? He, the metropolitan and chief of the Anglo-Saxon bishops, how could he suffer the episcopal dignity to be outraged in the person of the most illustrious of his brethren? He, the veteran monk, so zealous for the traditions and privileges of his order, how could he yield to the violence of laymen or to the jealousy of the Celts the most ardent propagator of the Benedictine rule? He, the envoy and direct representative of the Holy See in England, how dared he contemn that pontifical decision which Wilfrid had been charged to signify to him? Above all, how dared he brave the anathemas which the decree of the council directed against all traitors, whatever their rank?[1] On these questions, history, so abundant in other details, keeps entire silence; she leaves us no other resource than to look for future repentance and expiation for so shameful a connivance at sin.[2]

After a while King Egfrid resolved to treat with his captive. He offered to restore to him a part of his bishopric,

cum bullis et sigillis signatis. . . . Omnibus principibus ibidem habitantibus, nec non servis Dei in locum synodalem accersitis. . . . Jussione regis et ejus consiliatorum, cum consensu episcoporum qui ejus episcopatum tenebant . . . novem menses *sine ullo honore* custodire censuerunt . . . in suo solo vestimento. . . . Regina chrismarium hominis Dei reliquiis plenum (quod me enarrantem horruit) de se abstractum, in thalamo suo manens, aut curru pergens juxta se pependit. . . . Comes . . . in latebrosis locis, ubi raro sol per diem inluxit, et lampas per horrorem noctis non accenditur."

[1] "Si quidem episcopus est, qui hanc piam dispositionem temerare tentaverit, sit ab episcopali ordine destitutus, et æterni anathematis reus."

[2] BOLLAND., *loc. cit.*, p. 62.

with many gifts added to it, if Wilfrid would acquiesce in his will, and acknowledge the falsity of the apostolic decree. Wilfrid replied that it would be easier to take his head than to tear such a confession from him. When he was cast back into his cell, he there gave an example of patience and courage truly episcopal. The guards heard him chanting the psalms as if he were in his monastic stall at Ripon or Hexham; at night they saw his prison illumined by a light which terrified them. The wife of Earl Osfrid having fallen dangerously ill, her husband had recourse to the holy man whom he had been appointed to guard; he took him out of prison and led him to the bedside of the invalid. The latter, at an after period and when she had herself become an abbess, often related to her new family, with tears of gratitude, that the prisoner found her in the last stupor of departing life, yet that a few drops of holy water cast on her face, with prayer, were sufficient to cure her. Osfrid, penetrated with gratitude and admiration, quickly informed the king of what had happened. "I conjure you," said the brave Saxon, "both for your own welfare and for mine, no longer to persecute this holy and innocent bishop; as for me, I would rather die than continue this jailer's trade."[1] Far from listening to him, the king took from him the guardianship of the captive, who was sent to a castle still more remote, near Dunbar, on the shore of the Scottish sea, where he was entrusted to another earl much more harsh than Osfrid, with orders to keep him strictly isolated in his prison, and to put him in irons. But they were never able, Eddi tells us, to make these of the right size; they were always either too large or too small to confine the hands and feet of the prisoner.

While Wilfrid thus paid the price of his glory and his

[1] "Adhuc vivens illa, nunc sanctimonialis materfamilias, nomine Æbba, cum lacrymis hoc narrare consuevit. . . . Adjuro te per vitam meam et salutem tuam . . . quia magis eligo mori, quam eum innoxium flagellare."—EDDIUS, c. 35, 36.

courage, the king and queen made a triumphant progress through the very country where he was held prisoner. In the course of this tour, they arrived at the monastery of Coldingham, on the sea-shore, not far from Dunbar, and half-way between the prison and the holy island of Lindisfarne. In this great establishment, where Etheldreda had first taken refuge, two communities, one of men and one of women, obeyed the Abbess Ebba, sister of Oswy, and aunt of Egfrid. Like Hilda at Whitby, Ebba exercised at Coldingham, with great wisdom and authority, that sort of rule at once spiritual and temporal which was the inheritance of more than one Anglo-Saxon princess; but far from being, like Hilda, the enemy of Wilfrid, she became his liberator. During the night which the royal couple passed at the monastery, Queen Ermenburga was seized with an attack of delirium; in the morning the abbess appeared, and as the queen, whose limbs were already contracted, seemed at the point of death, Ebba, with the double authority of a cloistered superior and of a princess of the race of Odin, said to her nephew, "I know all that you have done; you have superseded Bishop Wilfrid without having a crime to accuse him of; and when he returned from his exile with an apostolic verdict in his favour, you robbed and imprisoned him, foolishly despising the power of St. Peter to bind and to loose. My son, listen to the words of her who speaks to you as a mother. Break the bishop's chains; restore to him the relics which the queen has taken from his neck, and which she carries about with her to her own injury, as the Philistines did the ark of God; and if (as would be best) you will not restore him to his bishopric, at least let him be free to leave your kingdom and go where he will. Then, upon my faith, the queen will recover; if not, I take God to witness, that He will punish you both."[1]

[1] "Sapientissima materfamilias veniens ad reginam contractis membris stricte alligatam et sine dubio morientem videns. . . . Ego scio et vere

Egfrid understood and obeyed: he sent the reliquary to Dunbar, with orders to set the bishop at liberty immediately. Ermenburga recovered, and Wilfrid, having speedily collected some of his numerous friends and disciples, took refuge in Mercia, the king of which country he supposed would be friendly towards him, in consequence of his having brought him from Rome the deed of privilege for Peterborough. But here also his expectations were vain. He had just founded a small monastery for the use of his troop of exiles when the hatred of his enemies discovered and pursued him. Ethelred, king of Mercia, had married a sister of Egfrid; and the queens, as we see in Saxon history, were often more powerful than the kings, for evil as well as for good. Ethelred, moved by the instigation of his wife, or by fear of displeasing his powerful brother-in-law, signified to his nephew, who had given one of his estates to the persecuted bishop, that he would endanger his head if he kept the enemy of King Egfrid another day in his territory. Wilfrid, therefore, was obliged to leave Mercia, and went into the neighbouring kingdom of Wessex. But here the hatred of another queen assailed him. The wife of Centwin, king of the Western Saxons, was the sister of that Ermenburga who had been the first cause of the poor exile's troubles: she had espoused her sister's quarrel; and again he was obliged to fly from a country in which there was no hospitality for him. These three brothers-in-law, kept by a common animosity in unwonted union, reigned over the three kingdoms which together occupied three-quarters at least of Saxon England.[1]

scio. . . . Et nunc, fili mi, secundum consilium matris tuæ fac, disrumpe vincula ejus et sanctas reliquias quas regina de collo spoliati abstraxit, et in perniciem sui (sicut arcam Dei . . .), dimitte."—EDDIUS, c. 37.

[1] "In eo territorio pro Deo donato monasteriolum fundavit, quod adhuc usque hodie monachi ejus possident. . . . Audientes hominem Dei . . . illic manentem et modicum quiescentem, Beorthvaldo in sua salute interdicunt, ut sibi eo minus diei spatium esset pro adulatione Egfridi regis. . . Nam illic regina . . . odio odebat eum, uti propter amicitiam regem

Wherever the influence of the Northumbrian king could extend, there was no longer for Wilfrid either security or peace.

Thus pursued by the influence of Ermenburga, her husband, and brothers-in-law, from almost the whole territory of the Saxon Confederation; repelled from Canterbury and its environs by the hostility or indifference of Archbishop Theodore, he took refuge in the smallest and most obscure of the seven kingdoms, and the only one which had not yet been Christianised, the kingdom of the Southern Saxons. The asylum which Christian kings refused him he hoped to find among his pagan countrymen. It may perhaps be recollected that he had been in great danger fifteen years before, at the commencement of his episcopate, on his return from his consecration at Compiègne, when wrecked on this inhospitable coast.[1] The king of Sussex himself, who was still a pagan like his subjects, had been then the leader of the wreckers. Now the king was a Christian, thanks to his wife, a Mercian princess; but the country continued almost completely inaccessible to Catholic missionaries. This kingdom had furnished to the Heptarchy its first known Bretwalda, Ælla, but since that time had fallen into obscurity, being defended at once against the invasions of its powerful neighbours, and against the efforts of the Canterbury monks, by its rocks and forests, which rendered it difficult of approach,[2] a circumstance which is hardly comprehensible now in sight of that soft and fertile country. The inhabitants held sternly to their ancient faith; they reproached the other Saxons, who were already Christians, with their apostasy. At the same time, they had among them the beginnings from which, in ordinary

trium dehinc fugatus abscessit. . . . Ita ut de propria provincia expulsus, nec in aliena regione, ultra vel citra mare, ubi potestas Egfridi prævaluit, requiem haberet."—EDDIUS, c. 38, 39.

[1] See vol. iii. p. 431.

[2] "Præ rupium multitudine et silvarum densitate . . . inexpugnabilis."—EDDIUS, c. 39.

cases, the conversion even of the most obstinate was produced—namely, a Christian princess and a monastery. This monastery, however, was occupied only by the small community of Celtic monks, of whom mention has already been made,[1] and the people of Sussex gave no heed to their teaching. It was to this new soil that Wilfrid came: he might be driven from his country and from his diocese, but nothing could prevent his being, wherever he was, the minister of the living God, and the preacher of the truth. His first exile had made him the Apostle of the Frisians; his second gave him occasion to open the doors of the Church to the last pagans who remained to be converted in the British Isles. Like Æneas at Carthage, he touched and gained the heart of the king and queen by his story of the cruel trials of his exile. He enlightened and roused their minds; he preached to them with infinite sweetness the greatness and goodness of God; and he obtained permission to address the mass of their people to whom no one had yet dared to carry the word of life.

Thus daily, for many successive months, the proscribed and fugitive bishop stood forth among those unconquered Saxons, and told them all the series of miracles worked by the Divine Power since the creation of the world; he taught them to condemn idols, to believe in a future judgment, to fear eternal punishment, and to desire eternal happiness. His persuasive eloquence triumphed over all obstacles. The chiefs of the nation, the earls and thanes, demanded baptism at his hands: four priests of his followers baptized the rest of the nation; a few, however, resisted; and the king thought himself authorised to compel them to follow the example of their countrymen.[2] This melancholy fact must be confessed with

[1] See vol. iii. p. 370.

[2] "Et si propter inimicitias regis in patria sive parochia sua recipi non potuit; non tamen ab evangelizandi potuit ministerio cohiberi . . . concedendo, imo multum gaudente rege primos provinciæ duces ac milites sacrosancto fonte abluebat."—BEDE, iv. 13. "Totius exsilii sui austeritatem per ordinem narravit . . . leniter suadens. . . . Stans episcopus noster in

regret, and forgiven, in consideration of the age and race, to which violence was so natural and so contagious; but it must be added that this is the sole instance in which force was employed in the whole history of the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons, a work which Wilfrid had the glory of completing by the noble labours of his exile.[1]

The God whom he preached to these last pagans permitted his mission to be the channel of other blessings besides the gift of salvation. Before Wilfrid's arrival, a drought of three years' duration had desolated the country, and famine decimated the population. The poor famished creatures might be seen dragging themselves, by forty or fifty at a time, to the edge of the precipitous cliffs on the shore, and thence, holding each other by their emaciated hands, they would plunge together into the sea.[2] But on the very day when Wilfrid administered baptism to the chiefs, a soft and abundant rain watered the desolate fields, and restored to all the hope of a plentiful harvest.[3] While the cruel famine lasted the bishop had taught his future converts a new means of gaining their subsistence by fishing with nets. Until his arrival, although the waters of the sea and of their rivers abounded with fish, they had been able to catch nothing but eels.[4] Wilfrid did

medio gentilium . . . per plures menses longo ambitu verborum . . . suaviloqua eloquentia omnia mirabiliter per ordinem prædicavit . . . paganorum utriusque sexus, quidam voluntarie, allii vero coacti regis imperio . . . in una dei multa millia baptizata sunt."—EDDIUS, c. 39.

[1] Bede says nothing of this use of force, which contrasted too strongly with the conduct he had so much praised in the first Christian king of Kent (i. 26); but, unhappily, we must believe the testimony of Eddi, who, if not actually with Wilfrid on his mission to Sussex, as at other places, must yet have known better than any one else exactly what passed there.

[2] "Sæpe quadraginta simil aut quinquaginta . . . procederent ad præcipitium . . . et junctis misere manibus, pariter omnes aut ruina perituri aut fluctibus absorbendi deciderent."

[3] "Ipso die . . . pluvia serena sed copiosa descendit, refloruit terra, rediitque viridantibus arvis annus lætus et frugifer."—BEDE, iv. 13.

[4] "Docuit eos piscando victum quærere. Piscandi peritia genti nulla nisi ad anguillas tantum inerat. . . . Collectis undecumque retibus anguillaribus."—BEDE, iv. 13.

not disdain to teach them how to join all their little nets into one large enough to catch the biggest fish. By such services he gradually gained the hearts of those whose souls he wished to save. The king of Sussex was as grateful as his people. He proved it by giving to the apostle of his country, for a residence during his exile, the domain on which he himself lived, and which supported eighty-seven families—that is to say, was, according to Saxon calculations, capable of feeding that number of mouths, and consequently quite sufficient for the train of monks and other Northumbrians who followed the exile in his wanderings. This estate formed a peninsula, which was called Seal's Island. Here Wilfrid founded a monastery, which afterwards became the seat of the most southern diocese of England,[1] and which he filled, half with monks who had come with him from the north, and half with novices taken from the converts of the south. These monks soon united in celebrating, among the other festivals of the Catholic liturgy, the feast of St. Oswald, the king who died fighting for the Christian faith and the independence of Northumbria, some years after the birth of Wilfrid; and this particular shows us how the unity of faith and associations consecrated by the new religion prepared the way for the social and political union of the different races of Great Britain.[2]

Wilfrid found on his new possessions two hundred and fifty slaves of both sexes, whom he not only delivered from the yoke of Satan by baptizing them, but also from that of men by setting them free.[3] It was thus that the monastic

[1] "Donavit terram octoginta septem familiarum ubi suos homines qui exules vagabantur. . . . Vocabulo *Sele-seu*," afterwards called Selsey, created a bishopric in 711, and transferred to Chichester in 1070.

[2] "Ex hoc tempore non solum in eodem monasterio, sed in plerisque locis aliis, cœpit annuatim ejusdem regis ac militis Christi natalitias dies missarum celebratione venerari."—BEDE, iv. 14.

[3] "Servos et ancillas . . . quos omnes, non solum baptizando a servitute dæmoniaca salvavit, sed etiam libertatem donando humanæ jugo servitutis absolvit."—BEDE, *l. c.*

apostles sowed from a full hand, in England as elsewhere, bread for the soul and for the body, salvation and freedom.

Five years thus passed over Wilfrid, in his laborious but fruitful exile, of which the conversion of the Southern Saxons was not the only consolation. While the proscribed bishop reconstituted a centre of monastic life and Christian evangelism in his peninsula of Selsey, the forests of Sussex gave asylum to a whole band of other exiles, of whom the chief was a young prince of the Western Saxons named Ceadwalla, who had been banished from Wessex by the same king who, acting on the suggestion of his wife, expelled Wilfrid. The similarity of their fortunes united the two fugitives, though the western prince was still a pagan. Wilfrid, who seems never to have feared a danger or refused to do a service, procured horses and money for Ceadwalla. The exiled prince, whose impetuosity and boldness were only surpassed by his cruelty, seized, one after the other, the two kingdoms of Wessex and Sussex, laid waste the kingdom of Kent, and ended by conquering the Isle of Wight. This picturesque island, so much admired by modern travellers, and which lies between the two districts occupied by the Saxons of the West and South, was inhabited by twelve hundred pagan families of the tribe of the Jutes, a race which first of all the German invaders had landed upon the coast of Kent. The ferocious Ceadwalla slaughtered them all, to avenge the wounds he had received in attacking them. But his mind was pervaded by a vague instinct of religion such as he had seen in Wilfrid, although he had not been moved to adopt it. Before he invaded the island he made a vow that, if victorious, he would give a quarter of his booty to the God of Wilfrid, and he kept his word by granting to the bishop a quarter of the conquered and depopulated island. He even carried his cruel condescension so far as to permit the monks to instruct and baptize two young brothers of the chief of the island before cutting them down in the general massacre. And the two young victims marched to death

with so joyous a confidence, that the popular veneration long counted them among the martyrs of the new faith. This savage, as soon as he returned to Wessex, summoned Wilfrid thither, treated him as his father and friend, and put himself definitely under instruction. But as soon as he understood, thanks to the teaching of Wilfrid, what religion and the Church meant, he found baptism by Bishop Wilfrid insufficient, and it will be hereafter seen that he went to Rome, as much to expiate his crimes by a laborious pilgrimage, as to receive baptism at the hands of the Pope.

Although the report of Wilfrid's fresh apostolic conquests, and of his relations with the kings of the provinces nearest the metropolis of Canterbury, must certainly have reached the ears of Archbishop Theodore, the conduct of that prelate towards him continued inexplicable. In spite of the decrees of the Holy See, he held at Twyford, in Northumbria, a council, where, with the consent of King Egfrid, he disposed of the episcopal sees of Hexham and Lindisfarne, exactly as if these dioceses had not been parts of that of York, or as if Wilfrid had been dead or canonically deposed.[1] The first bishop thus placed by Theodore at Hexham, a see created in the very monastery built and endowed by Wilfrid, was an admirable monk, named Cuthbert, whose virtues and sanctity had long been celebrated in Northumbria; and, what is stranger still, nothing in the fully detailed life of this saint which has been preserved to us, shows that his repugnance to be made bishop had any connection with the manifest violation of the rights of him whose place he was called upon to usurp. All that he desired was to be transferred from Hexham to Lindisfarne—that is to say, to the episcopal monastery where he had been educated, and in which, or in one of its dependencies, he had always lived. He evidently believed that the metropolitan supremacy of Theodore was without limit, and dispensed him from following the canons of the Church.

[1] BEDE, iv. 28; BOLLAND., t. vi. Sept., p. 64.

King Egfrid professed the most affectionate devotion to Cuthbert; but this need not astonish us. The persecutor of Wilfrid was far from being the enemy of the Church or of the monastic order. He was, on the contrary, the founder and benefactor of many of the great monasteries of the north of England, and the friend of all the saints of his time, except Wilfrid alone; and it seems to have been his wish to transfer to Cuthbert the confiding affection and respectful deference with which he had treated Wilfrid in the early part of his reign. Ermenburga, the cruel enemy of Wilfrid, was, like her husband, filled with the most ardent veneration for the holy monk, who had become one of the successors of her victim. But this devotion did not prevent Egfrid from giving himself up to ambition, and indulging in a thirst for war and conquest too much conformed to the traditions of his ancestors and pagan predecessors, "the Ravager," and "the Man of Fire."[1] In 684, without any known motive, he sent an army against Ireland, which devastated that island with pitiless cruelty. This invasion is the first of the unexpiated national crimes of the Anglo-Saxons against Ireland. It excited the indignation, not only of the victims, but also of the witnesses of its barbarity. The Venerable Bede himself, though little to be suspected of partiality, or even of justice, as regards the Celts, points out the crime committed by the king of his nation against an innocent people, who, far from espousing the cause of the British Celts, had always been the friends and allies of the Anglo-Saxons. The soldiers of Egfrid did not even spare those great and holy monasteries where the Anglo-Saxon youth were in the habit of going to learn evangelical piety and knowledge, or where, as at Mayo, there lived a numerous community of Northumbrian monks who had preferred to forsake their country, and remain faithful to the teachings of their first apostles, rather than to submit to the triumph of Wilfrid and the Roman rule. The poor Irish, after

[1] See vol. iii. p. 253.

defending themselves to the utmost, were everywhere vanquished, and had no other resource left but that of seeking by constant and solemn imprecations to call down the vengeance of Heaven upon their unworthy assailants.[1] This time at least their too legitimate curses were realised.

In vain the Northumbrian Egbert, an illustrious and most learned monk of Lindisfarne, who had voluntarily banished himself to Ireland for the love of Christ and the benefit of his soul,[2] and who had great authority in both islands, supplicated the king of his native country to spare a people who had in no way provoked his anger. In vain the holy Bishop Cuthbert, together with the best friends of the king, endeavoured in the following year to dissuade him from commencing a war, not less cruel, and perhaps not less unjust, against the Picts. Egfrid would listen neither to one nor the other, but hurried to his ruin. He himself led his troops, and permitted them under his very eyes to devastate the invaded country with atrocious cruelty.[3] The northern Celts retired before him, and thus succeeded in drawing him into a Highland pass, where he perished with his whole army, while still scarcely forty years of age, and after a reign of fifteen years. It was the counterpoise and return for the victory he had gained at the beginning of his reign in the days of his happy union with Wilfrid. This disaster was the signal for the liberation of the Celtic races whom Oswald, Oswy, and Egfrid had brought under the yoke of Northumbria, a yoke now broken for ever. The Picts, the Scots, and the Britons of Strathclyde, together rushed upon the Angles, and drove them from the whole

[1] "Gentem innoxiam et nationi Anglorum semper amicissimam. . . . At insulani . . . cælitus vindicari continuis diu imprecationibus postulabant."—BEDE, iv. 26.

[2] "Venerabilis et cum omni honorificentia honorandus famulus Christi et sacerdos Egbert quem in Hibernia insula peregrinans ducere vitam pro adipiscenda in cœlo patria retulimus."—BEDE, v. 9.

[3] "Dum Egfridus . . . eorum regna atroci sævitia devastabat."—BEDE, *Vita S. Cuthberti*, c. 27.

conquered territory between the Firth of Forth and the Tweed. Since then the northern frontier of Northumbria and of all England has remained fixed at the line which runs from the mouth of the Tweed to the Solway Firth. And since then, also, the Angles who remained north of the Tweed have been subject to the Scots and Picts, forming with them the kingdom henceforward called Scotland. From that day the splendour of Northumbria was eclipsed.[1]

Queen Ermenburga awaited the result of her husband's expedition in a monastery governed by one of her sisters at Carlisle, in the centre of the British population of Cumberland;[2] and the holy bishop Cuthbert, to whom King Egbert had given this town with its environs, came to the same place to console her in case of a misfortune which he but too clearly foresaw. On the day after his arrival, as the governor of the town accompanied him towards the ancient ramparts of the Roman city, he made a sudden pause, and, leaning on his staff, said with a sigh, "Alas! I fear that all is over, and that the judgment of God has come upon our army." When he was urged to explain what he meant, he merely replied, "See how clear the sky is, and remember that the judgments of God are inscrutable."[3] Upon this he immediately returned to the queen, and told her that he feared the king had perished, and that she ought to start not the next day, which was Sunday, a day on which it was

[1] "Ex quo tempore spes cœpit et virtus regni Anglorum fluere ac retro sublapsa referri."—BEDE, *Hist. Eccles.*, iv. 26.

[2] Carlisle was, as we have said, emphatically British. Even to the present day Cumberland has retained its British population. It bore the title of kingdom in the middle ages, after it had escaped from the Northumbrian yoke.—VARIN, memoir already quoted, p. 236; see also Spruner's Historic Atlas.

[3] "Stans juxta baculum sustentationis . . . suspirans, ait: O, ô, ô! existimo enim perpetratum esse bellum, judicatumque est judicium de populis nostris bellantibus adversum. . . . O filioli mei, considerate quam admirabilis sit aer, et recogitate quam inscrutabilia sint judicia Dei."—*Tertia Vita auctore Monacho coævo*, ap. BOLLAND., t. iii. Martii, p. 123. The version of Bede, in the *Life of S. Cuthbert*, ch. 27, says, on the contrary, "Nonne videtis quam mire mutatus et turbatus sit aer!"

unlawful to travel in a carriage,[1] but on the Monday, to seek refuge in the royal fortress of Bamborough, where he promised to join her.

Two days afterwards a fugitive from the battle came to tell that at the very hour indicated by the saint, King Egfrid, whose guards had all perished in his defence, had been killed by the avenging sword of a Pict.

Ermenburga bowed to the Divine hand which struck her. She took the veil from the hands of Cuthbert in her sister's monastery at Carlisle. This Jezebel, as she is called by the friend of Wilfrid, changed suddenly from a wolf into a lamb,[2] and became the model of abbesses. The body of her husband was not buried at Whitby, as those of his father and grandfather had been,[3] but carried, perhaps as a trophy of the victory, to the monastic island of Iona, which had been the asylum of his race in their exile, and which was still the national sanctuary of the victors.

Wilfrid, banished and deprived of his diocese, was thus but too well avenged. The Northumbrian kingdom, which had struck in his person at the independence and growing authority of the Church, paid the price of its fault by losing half its dominions, and by witnessing the downfall of that political and religious edifice which had been built upon the ruin of the Bishop of York.

One of the new bishops substituted for Wilfrid, a Saxon monk, named Trumwine, whose see had been placed at Abercorn, on the banks of the Forth, at the extreme limit of the Northumbrian territory, escaped with difficulty from death or slavery, the only alternative which the Celtic conquerors left to their defeated enemies. With him came all

[1] "Quia die dominico curru ire non licet." Even now, among the descendants of the Anglo-Saxons inhabiting Scotland, popular piety renders it difficult to travel on Sunday.

[2] "De lupa, post occisionem regis, agna Domini et perfecta abbatissa materque familias optima commutata est."—EDDIUS, c. 23. Cf. BEDE, *Vita S. Cuthberti*, c. 27, 28.

[3] See above, p. 5.

his monks, whom he dispersed, as he best could, among the Northumbrian communities, as it was necessary to do afterwards with the Saxon nuns of his diocese, who fled before the irritated Celts, whom they regarded as savages. He himself sought a refuge at Whitby, where he passed the rest of his days, rendering such services as were compatible with his episcopal character to the abbess, who was invested with the difficult mission of ruling a double community of monks and nuns.[1] It was no longer Hilda the holy foundress who governed this great establishment; it was a daughter of Oswy, a sister of the three last Northumbrian kings, that Elfleda, whom her father had devoted to God as the price of his victory over the Mercians, and who, entrusted from infancy to Hilda, had grown up in the shadow of the great sea-side monastery. Her mother, Queen Eanfleda, the widow of Oswy, and first protectress of Wilfrid, had joined her there, to end her days in peace beside the tomb of her husband, and under the crosier of her daughter.

The adversaries of Wilfrid thus vanished one by one. Of the three principal authors of his ruin, Egfrid was now dead, and Ermenburga a veiled nun. There still remained Archbishop Theodore. Whether the death of Egfrid had acted as a warning to him, or whether the recollection of his apostolic mission, which, in respect to Wilfrid, he had so ill fulfilled, came back to his mind, with a remorse made keener by age and illness, at least it became apparent to him that the moment for confessing and expiating his fault

[1] "Inter plurimos gentis Anglorum vel interemptos gladio, vel servitio addictos, vel de terra Pictorum fuga lapsos . . . recessit cum suis, eosque ubicumque poterat amicis per monasteria commendans . . . in monastica districtione non sibi solummodo, sed et multis utilem ducit . . . ipse in supradicto famulorum famularumque Dei monasterio. Adveniente illuc episcopo, maximum regendi auxilium simul et suæ vitæ solatium devota Deo doctrix invenit."—BEDE, iv. 26. He died there in 700. We find that St. Cuthbert assigned a residence in a town of his diocese to the Northern nuns, "timore barbarici exercitus a monasterio suo profugis."—*Vita S. Cuthberti*, c. 30.

had come, and he did so with the complete and generous frankness which belongs to great minds.[1] He was an old man even at the moment when he was taken from his Eastern monastery to be placed at the head of the English Church, and he had now laboured nearly twenty years in that fruitful but rude and thorny field. He was thus more than eighty, and the day of his death could not be far distant. The archbishop perceived that if death overtook him before he was reconciled to Wilfrid, the great works he had accomplished in regulating, purifying, and consolidating the morals and Christian institutions of England would be in some degree contradicted before God and men, by the sight of the great bishop, who had been robbed and exiled solely for having defended his rights and obeyed the Holy See. Accordingly, he summoned Wilfrid to him. Sussex, the residence of the exile, was near to Canterbury, or rather to London, where the interview took place, in presence of a holy monk, who was Bishop of London and of the East Saxons.[2] In presence of these two bishops, the countryman and successor of St. Paul[3] made his general confession. When he had ended, he said to Wilfrid, "My greatest remorse is for the crime I have committed against you, most holy bishop, in consenting to the will of the kings when they robbed you of your possessions and sent you into exile without any fault of yours. I confess it to God and St. Peter, and I take you both to witness that I will do what I can to make up for this sin, and to reconcile you with all the kings and nobles, among my friends, whether they wish it or not. God has revealed to me that I shall die within a year; therefore I conjure you, by the love of God and St.

[1] "Auctoritatem apostolicæ sedis, a qua missus fuerat, metu agitante, honorificans."—EDDIUS, c. 41. "De peccato in Wilfridum commisso sauciatus conscientiam."—GUILL. MALMESB., f. 151.

[2] Earconwald, of whom more will be said later.—BEDE, iv. 6, 11.

[3] The English have an old tradition, according to which St. Paul, born, like Theodore, at Tarsus in Cilicia, was the first to preach the Christian faith in Britain.

Peter, to consent that I establish you during my life as heir to my archiepiscopal see, for I acknowledge that of all your nation you are the best instructed in all knowledge and in the discipline of Rome."[1] Wilfrid answered, "May God and St. Peter pardon you all our controversy. I shall always pray for you as your friend. Send letters now to your friends that they may be made aware of our reconciliation, and the injustice of that robbery of which I have been the victim, and that they may restore to me at least a part of my goods, according to the command of the Holy See. After which we will examine with you in the great council of the country who is the most worthy to become your successor."[2]

The old archbishop immediately set to work to repair as far as possible the injury he had done to Wilfrid. He wrote letters to all quarters, to plead his cause and to secure for him as many friends as he had once sought to make him enemies.[3] Unfortunately only one of these letters has been preserved, but it is sufficient to do honour to his goodness of heart, and to show how the old Greek monk, transplanted into the midst of a Germanic population, could rule and train the souls under his authority, like a worthy successor and countryman of him who acknowledged himself, according to Scripture, "debtor both to the Greeks and barbarians." It is addressed to Ethelred, king of Mercia, who by his means had become the friend and brother-in-law of Wilfrid's chief persecutor.[4] "My very

[1] "Sapienter totius vitæ suæ cursum cum confessione coram Domino pure revelavit. . . . Cunctos amicos meos regales et principes eorum ad amicitiam tuam . . . volentes nolentesque constringens adtraho . . . quia veraciter in omni sapientia et in judiciis Romanorum eruditissimum te vestræ gentis agnovi."—EDDIUS, c. 41.

[2] "Ero pro tua confessione orans pro te amicus in perpetuum. . . . Modo primum mitte nuntios cum litteris . . . ut me olim innoxium exspoliatum agnoscant . . . et postea . . . quis dignus sit . . . cum consensus tuo in majori consilio consulemus."—*Ibid.* c. 41.

[3] "Sibi ubique amicos, quasi prius inimicos, facere diligenter excogitavit."—*Ibid.*

[4] See BEDE, iv. 21.

dear son,—Let your holiness know that I am at peace with the venerable Bishop Wilfrid; therefore I beseech and enjoin you, by the love of Christ, to give him your protection as you formerly did, to the utmost of your power, and as long as you live; for all this time while robbed of his possessions, he has laboured for God among the heathen. It is I, Theodore, the humble and infirm bishop, who in my old age address to you this exhortation, according to the apostolic will, so that this holy man may forget the injuries of which he has been so unjustly the victim, and that amends may be made to him. I would ask you besides, if you still love me, although the length of the journey may make my request importunate, let me see once more your dear countenance, that I may bless you before I die. But above all, my son, my dear son, do what I conjure you to do for the holy Wilfrid. If you obey your father who will not be much longer in this world, obedience will bring you happiness. Adieu, peace be with you, live in Christ, abide in the Lord, and may the Lord abide in you."[1] This letter had its due effect. Ethelred received Wilfrid with great honour, although six years before he would not suffer him to spend a single night in his kingdom; he restored all the monasteries and domains which had formerly been his in Mercia, and to the end of his life remained faithfully attached to him.

But it was in Northumbria above all that it was important to obtain restitution for the robbed and humiliated bishop. For this purpose Theodore addressed himself to the new king Aldfrid and to the princess Elfleda, sister of the king, and abbess of Whitby, who had naturally inherited a dislike for

[1] "Cognoscat tua miranda sanctitas, pacem me in Christo habere cum venerando episcopo Wilfrido. . . . Ego Theodorus, humilis episcopus, decrepita ætate, hoc tuæ beatitudini suggero . . . et licet tibi pro longinquitate itineris durum esse videatur, oculi mei faciem tuam jucundam videant. . . . Age ergo, fili mi, fili mi, taliter de illo supra fato viro sanctissimo, sicut te deprecatus sum. . . . Vale in pace, vive in Christo, dege in Domino, Dominus sit tecum."

Wilfrid from St. Hilda, from whom she had received her education, before becoming her successor, and whose vast buildings she was about to complete.[1]

Hilda had been quickly followed to the grave by her illustrious rival Ebba, who was, like herself, a princess of the Northumbrian royal dynasty, and abbess of a double monastery at Coldingham. The young Elfleda, niece of Ebba and heiress of Hilda, was therefore the sole representative in Northumbria of that great and salutary authority which was so willingly yielded by the Anglo-Saxon kings and people to those princesses of their sovereign races who became the brides of Christ. The noble Elfleda, who was scarcely twenty-five years of age when she was called to succeed Hilda as abbess of Whitby, is described by Bede as a most pious mistress of spiritual life. But like all the Anglo-Saxon princesses whom we meet with in the cloister at this epoch, she did not cease to take a passionate interest in the affairs of her race and country. All the more strongly, in consequence, she felt the need of spiritual help to aid her virgin motherhood in ruling the many souls gathered together under her crosier.[2] It was chiefly to Cuthbert that she had recourse. Before he had become bishop, while he lived on a desert rock near Lindisfarne, she had prevailed on him to grant her an interview on an island on the Northumbrian coast, called then, as now, Coquet Island, and which lies nearer Lindisfarne than Whitby. This was while her brother Egfrid still reigned. The hermit and the abbess went each to their meeting by sea; and when he had answered all her questions, she threw herself at his feet, and entreated him to tell her, by virtue of those prophetic powers

[1] "Præcipuum monasterium . . . quod ab insignis religionis femina Hilda cœptum, Edelfleda ejusdem regis filia in regimine succedens, magnis fiscalium opum molibus auxit."—GUILL. MALMESB., *De Gest. Reg.*, iii.

[2] "Devota Deo doctrix . . . quæ inter gaudia virginitatis non paucis famularum Christi agminibus maternæ pietatis curam adhibebat . . . venerandissima virgo et mater virginum . . . multo virum De semper excolebat amore."—BEDE, iv. 26, in *Vita S. Cuthberti*, c. 24. Cf. 34.

with which he was known to be gifted, whether her brother Egfrid should have a long life and reign. "I am surprised," he answered, "that a woman well taught and versed as you are in the knowledge of Holy Scripture should speak to me of length with regard to human life, which lasts no longer than a spider's web, as the Psalmist has said, '*Quia anni nostri sicut aranea meditabuntur.*' How short then must life be for a man who has but a year to live, and who has death at his door!" At these words, she wept long; then, drying her tears, she continued, with feminine boldness, and inquired who should be the king's successor, since he had neither sons nor brothers. "Do not say," he replied, "that he is without heirs; he shall have a successor whom you will love, as you love Egfrid, as a sister." "Then tell me, I entreat you, where this successor is." "You see," returned Cuthbert, directing the eyes of his companion towards the archipelago of islets which dots the Northumbrian coast around Lindisfarne, "how many isles are in the vast ocean; it is easy for God to bring from them some one to reign over the English." Elfleda then perceived that he spoke of a young man supposed to be the son of her father Oswy, by an Irish mother, and who, since his infancy, had lived as an exile at Iona, where he gave himself up to study.[1]

And it thus happened in reality that the cruel and warlike Egfrid was succeeded on the most important throne of the Anglo-Saxon confederation by a learned prince who, during twenty years of a long and prosperous reign, sustained and restored to the utmost extent of his powers the ancient glory of the Northumbrian kingdom, within the new limits to which the victorious insurrection of the Picts had restricted

[1] "Repente in medio sermone advoluta pedibus ejus, adjuravit eum. . . . Hæc audiens fusis lacrymis præsagia dira defiebat: extersaque facie, rursus audacia feminea adjuravit per majestatem summæ divinitatis. . . . Cernis hoc mare magnum et spatiosum, quot abundat insulis! Facile est Deo de aliqua harum sibi provideri, quem regno præficiat Anglorum. Intellexit ergo quia de Aldfrido diceret, qui tunc in insulis Scotorum ob studium litterarum exsulebat."—BEDE, *Vita S. Cuthberti*, c. 24.

it, but who specially distinguished himself by his love of letters and knowledge. Aldfrid[1] had passed his early days at Iona, in that island retreat where his father Oswy and his uncle Oswald had both found refuge in their youth, and whither the bleeding body of the brother whose crown descended to him had just been carried. During his long, and perhaps voluntary, exile in the Scottish monasteries and schools, he had been trained in theology and dialectics, cosmography, and all the studies then cultivated by the Celtic monks. He brought back from his residence at Iona, and his visits to Melrose and other places, that passionate curiosity and lavish liberality which may be traced among the Irish of the seventh century, and which seems a kind of prelude to the revival of learning in the fifteenth century.[2]

To this new king, as well as to his sister, the Abbess Elfleda, Archbishop Theodore wrote, to exhort them both to lay aside their enmity against Wilfrid, and to receive him with unreserved kindness.[3] A prince so much given to letters could not remain deaf to the prayers of an archbishop who added to his authority as legate of the Holy See and primate of the Anglo-Saxon Church the fame of greater learning and zeal for intellectual culture than had ever before been seen in Britain. Accordingly, in the second year of his reign, Aldfrid recalled Wilfrid to Northumbria, and restored to him, first, the monastery of Hexham, with

[1] It has already been said that he must not be confounded with Alchfrid, the eldest legitimate son of Oswy, and Wilfrid's first friend. Aldfrid was a natural son, and probably the eldest of Oswy's children.

[2] "Qui nunc regnat pacifice, qui tunc erat in insula quam Hy nominant." —*Vita brevis S. Cuthberti*, ap. BOLLAND., t. iii. Mart., p. 141. "Vir in Scripturis doctissimus. . . . Destructum regni statum quamvis intra fines angustiores nobiliter recuperavit."—BEDE, *Hist.*, iv. 26. "Qui in regionibus Scotorum lectioni operam dabat, ibi ob amorem sapientiæ spontaneum passus exilium."—BEDE, *Vita Cuthberti*, c. 14. "Ab odio germani tutus, et magno otio litteris imbutus, omni philosophia composuerat animum." —WILLELM. MALMESB., *De Gest. Reg.*, c. 52.

[3] "Ut simultatibus retropositis incunctanter caritatem ejus complecterentur."—BOLLAND., t. ii. Febr., p. 184.

all the surrounding parishes, then the bishopric of York, and finally Ripon, which had been his chosen home, and the centre of his reforms. It is easy to understand the joy of the monks of those great communities, formed by Wilfrid, who had, no doubt, daily prayed for the restoration of their father. They went out to meet him in crowds, and led him back in triumph to the churches he had built for them.[1] The bishops formerly placed by Theodore at Hexham, Ripon, and York,[2] were dismissed; and the holy Bishop of Lindisfarne having voluntarily abdicated to return to his solitary rock of Fern, and there prepare for his approaching death, Wilfrid was charged to appoint his successor.

The four dioceses formed by the division of the great diocese of York, which comprehended all the country north of the Humber, were thus once more united under the crosier of Wilfrid. But a restoration so complete lasted only a year: the administration of Wilfrid met great opposition at Lindisfarne. On this subject the Venerable Bede, who was as prudent as sincere, speaks only by hints.[3] It may be divined that Wilfrid took advantage of his re-establishment in his diocese to strike a last blow at Celtic traditions, and that spirit of independence which the first Scottish apostles of Northumbria had introduced into the holy island. The

[1] "In gaudio subjectorum suorum de exsilio . . . rediens."—EDDIUS, c. 43. "Crebra monachorum examina patri obviam procedunt."—EADMER, *Vita S. Wilfridi*, c. 21.

[2] This is affirmed by Eddi, a contemporary and witness of most of the facts he relates, while Bede and other authors suppose that St. John, called of Beverley, a monk of Whitby, who had been placed at Hexham in 685 by the Archbishop Theodore, was transferred to York when Wilfrid returned. Probably Bede anticipated by some years the nomination of John, who was certainly the successor of Wilfrid at York, after his second exile.

[3] "Tanta ecclesiam illam tentationis aura concussit, ut plures e fratribus loco magis cedere, quam talibus vellent interesse periculis." Then speaking of the successor of Wilfrid: "Fugatis perturbationum procellis . . . sanavit contritos corde, et alligavit contritiones eorum . . . quia post ejus (Cuthberti) obitum repellendi ac destruendi essent cives set post ascensionem minantis iræ cælestis protinus miseratione refovendi."—*Vita S. Cuthberti*, c. 39.

changes he attempted to introduce were so unbearable to the Anglo-Saxon monks of the school of Cuthbert and his masters, that they declared themselves ready to imitate their brethren who had left Ripon at the arrival of Wilfrid. They preferred to leave the first sanctuary of Christianity and the cradle of their order in Northumbria, rather than to yield to the tyranny of their new superior. He himself became aware that their resistance was insurmountable, and at the end of a year he gave up Lindisfarne to a new bishop who, being both wise and gentle, calmed all parties.[1]

About this time the prediction of Archbishop Theodore was verified; he died at the age of eighty-eight, after a pontificate of twenty-two years. His conduct towards Wilfrid is open to the widest censure, and can scarcely be explained otherwise than by the jealousy inspired in the metropolitan of England by the splendour and power of the immense bishopric of York under a ruler such as Wilfrid. But an impartial posterity owes him at least the justice rendered him by his contemporaries, and is bound to recognise in him a man who did more than any of his six predecessors to organise and consolidate the Church of England, on the double basis of Roman supremacy and of the union of the Anglo-Saxon bishoprics among themselves by their subordination to the metropolitan see of Canterbury.[2] No bishop before him had laboured so much for the intellectual development of the native clergy, or for the union of the different Anglo-Saxon dynasties. The Greek monk, therefore, may well be reckoned among the founders of the English Church and nationality; and when he was buried, wrapped in his monastic habit in place of a shroud,[3] in the ecclesiastical burying-ground of Canterbury, it was

[1] BEDE, iv. 29. His name was Eadbert.

[2] "Tantum profectus spiritalis tempore præsulatus illius Anglorum ecclesiæ, quantum nunquam antea potuere, cœperunt."—BEDE, v. 8.

[3] "Jacebat uti a primordio erat depositus integra forma metropolitani sacerdotii pallio et monachiti tantum obductus cuculla."—GOTSELINUS, *Translatio SS. Reliq.*, l. ii. c. 27.

but just that he should be laid on the right hand of St. Augustin, the Italian monk who a century earlier had cast the first seeds of faith and Christian civilisation into the soul of the Anglo-Saxon race.[1]

[1] The following lines were written by a poet of the time on the seven monks who were the first seven Archbishops of Canterbury, and who were buried side by side :—

"Septem primates sunt Anglis et proto-patres,
Septem rectores, septemque per æthra triones ;
Septem sunt stellæ, nitet his hæc area cellæ ;
Septem cisternæ vitæ, septemque lucernæ."

CHAPTER V

SECOND EXILE OF WILFRID, AND SECOND APPEAL TO ROME.—686–705

Rupture of Wilfrid with King Aldfrid.—New accusations against Wilfrid.—He is exiled the second time.—He is received by the king of Mercia, who gives him the bishopric of Lichfield.—He there lives eleven years in tranquil obscurity.—Theodore's successor hostile to Wilfrid, as also Abbot Adrian.—Assembly of Nesterfield.—Degrading proposals made to Wilfrid; he rejects them.—His speech.—He appeals to Rome.—Precocious talent of the Anglo-Saxons in diplomacy and despotism.—King Ethelred of Mercia remains faithful to Wilfrid.—The monks of Ripon are excommunicated.—Wilfrid's third voyage to Rome.—Contrast with the first.—Pope John VI.—The trial lasts four months, and occupies seventy sittings.—Wilfrid is acquitted.—Returning to England, he falls ill at Meaux.—His friend Acca.—His life is prolonged in answer to the prayers of his monks.—He is reconciled to the archbishop.—He goes to visit his faithful friend Ethelred, now become a monk at Bardeney.—Aldfrid, king of Northumbria, refuses to recognise the sentence of the Holy See.—He dies.—His successor expels Wilfrid within six days, but is himself dethroned.—National assembly on the banks of the Nid.—The Abbess Elfleda and the Ealdorman Bertfrid interpose on behalf of Wilfrid.—General reconciliation.—The monasteries of Ripon and Hexham given up to him.—Influence of Anglo-Saxon princesses on the destiny of Wilfrid.

WILFRID was fifty-six when his great rival, thus tardily transformed into a repentant and faithful ally, died; and for more than a quarter of a century his life had been one continued conflict. He might therefore hope for a little repose, and even perhaps believe it possible. But God still had in reserve for him long years of renewed trials. The first half of his history is repeated in the second with a wearisome monotony as to the events, but with the

same constancy and courage in the hero of the endless struggle.[1]

The truce which was granted to him in the midst of his laborious career lasted but five years. It was more than once disturbed: calm and storm alternately characterised his relations with King Aldfrid, a monarch justly dear to the Northumbrians, whom his courage and ability preserved from the disastrous consequences of Egfrid's downfall. But in 691 the king, freed from the influence which Archbishop Theodore had exercised over him, as well as over all England, cast off all pretences towards the bishop, whose moral and material power was an offence to him, as it had been to his father and brother. Predisposed, also, by his education and his long residence in Ireland to favour Celtic tendencies, it may be supposed that he easily allowed himself to be influenced by the rancour and ill-will naturally entertained towards Wilfrid by the disciples and partisans of Scotic monks and bishops. Thus war was once more declared between the court of Northumbria and that exclusively Roman and Benedictine spirit, of which Wilfrid was the uncompromising champion.[2]

[1] The following are the principal dates of the life of Wilfrid :—

664. Named Bishop of York and of all Northumbria.
665. Replaced by Ceadda, during his absence in France for his consecration. He retires to Ripon.
669. Recalled to York by the intervention of Theodore.
678. Dismemberment of the diocese; he is removed from York, and transferred to Lindisfarne; he refuses, and appeals to Rome.
679. On his return from Rome, with a judgment in his favour, he is imprisoned, and afterwards exiled.
686. After the death of Egfrid, he is a second time re-established.
691. Third expulsion by King Aldfrid, and second exile.
692. He is made Bishop of Lichfield.
703. Assembly of Nesterfield. Wilfrid refuses to sign his deposition. Second appeal to the Holy See; third voyage to Rome.
705. He returns to England. Assembly on the banks of the Nid; his two monasteries of Ripon and Hexham are restored to him.
709. He dies at Oundle.

[2] "Nam antiquæ inimicitiæ suasores, quasi de sopore somni excitati . . .

Three complaints in chief were brought against the great bishop, two of which dated back to the origin of the struggle begun by Wilfrid between the Celts and Romanists. The matter in question was the monastery of Ripon, founded originally for a colony of Celtic novices from Melrose, but afterwards given to Wilfrid, to the injury of the first owners, and dedicated by him to St. Peter, as if with the intention of holding up the standard under which he intended to fight. His new adversaries at first proposed to deprive the Church of Ripon, the true capital of Wilfrid's spiritual kingdom, of a portion of its vast possessions, and to erect this into a new bishopric, dividing a second time the diocese of York, for the extension of Celtic influence, but in contempt of the Pontifical verdict and of the royal grant which had irrevocably guaranteed to Wilfrid and his monks the existence of this community free and exempt from all other jurisdiction.[1] Wilfrid, with his usual firmness, refused to consent to this division; upon which his adversaries changed their tactics, and reproached him for not obeying all the decrees issued by Archbishop Theodore as legate of the Holy See. This was in evident reference to the new bishoprics erected by Theodore in Wilfrid's diocese. With address worthy of a more civilised century, the theologians of the Northumbrian king thus taught him to transform the most devoted champion of Rome into an insurgent against the authority of the Holy See, and to make of the archbishop who had just died reconciled to Wilfrid, an adversary not less dangerous after his death than during his life. Wilfrid replied that he willingly

facem dissensionis extinctam resuscitavere, quippe inter regem sapientissimum et sanctum virum . . . iterum in concordia, atque iterum in discordia alternatim per multos annos viventes . . . usque, dum postremo maxima flamma inimicitiæ exardecescente . . . expulsus recessit. Prima causa est dissensionis eorum de antiqua origine descendens."—EDDIUS, c. 43.

[1] "Ut monasterium quod in privilegium nobis donabatur . . . in episcopalem sedem transmutetur; et libertatem relinquere, quam sanctus Agatho et quique reges censuerunt fixe et firmiter possidere." —*Ibid.*

recognised the statutes made by Theodore before their rupture, and after their reconciliation—that is to say, while all the churches were canonically united—but not those which dated from the interval in which division reigned. This was a sufficient pretence for his enemies to treat him as a rebel and consign him to a new exile.

Thus Wilfrid found himself, for the third time, deprived of the see to which he had been canonically appointed by the father and brother of King Aldfrid twenty years before; and sentenced to a second exile for refusing to lend himself to the schemes of the adversaries of law and of monastic and ecclesiastical freedom. He sought refuge in Mercia, the country which he had so often visited in the time of his sainted friend Etheldreda, where the great monastery of Peter's Burg, with its hitherto unquestioned independence, reminded him of ancient efforts happily accomplished, and where King Ethelred, who had been definitively won over to his side by the touching letter of the aged Archbishop Theodore, and who saw in him the representative of Roman authority, offered him effectual protection and an affection which never wavered in its fidelity.[1] This king immediately called him to the vacant see of Lichfield, which, since the new episcopal division arranged by Theodore, no longer comprehended the whole of Mercia, but which still offered a sufficient field to the apostolic zeal of Wilfrid. It was the see which had been held by the gentle and pious Ceadda, who superseded Wilfrid at York, at the time of his first quarrel with King Oswy in 665. Wilfrid now succeeded his former supplanter, changing for the fourth time his episcopal residence.[2] In this obscure and restricted sphere, he contented himself with fulfilling his duties as bishop, and awaiting better days with patience. Here he lived eleven years, and during that long interval one single trace of his active work is all that is visible—the

[1] "Ad amicum fidelem accessit . . . qui eum cum magno honore propter reverentiam apostolicæ sedis suscepit."—EDDIUS, c. 43.

[2] York, Hexham, Lindisfarne, and Lichfield.

consecration of a missionary bishop named Swidbert. This missionary, destined to be the apostle of Westphalia, had already visited that region of Friesland whither Wilfrid himself carried the first revelation of the Gospel, and whither his example had led several Anglo-Saxon monks, the traces of whose light-giving progress will be met with further on.

It is evident that no one thought of doing anything to carry out the intention, so clearly expressed by Theodore, of making Wilfrid his successor. On the contrary, after an interval of two years, a priest named Berchtwald, formerly a monk at Glastonbury, and afterwards abbot of a monastery built at Reculver, on the site of the palace to which the first Christian king had retired, after giving up his capital to Augustin, was elected to the vacant see. Berchtwald was descended from the dynasty which reigned in Mercia, and was the first of the race of Odin who took his place among the successors of the apostles.[1] One Anglo-Saxon had already figured among the Archbishops of Canterbury; but as he had changed his name into the Roman appellation of *Deusdedit*, he has been reckoned among the foreign prelates, and the national historians, chronicling the promotion of Berchtwald, write proudly, "Hitherto our bishops had been Roman; from this time they were English."[2] As there was no other metropolitan in England, he had to go to Lyons to be consecrated. He presided over the English Church for nearly forty years. He was very learned, deeply imbued with the knowledge of Holy Scripture, and of monastic discipline; but the Saxon Bede acknowledges that he was far from equalling his predecessor, Theodore the Greek.[3]

But from whence arose the hostility of the new archbishop to Wilfrid? Perhaps the seeds of it had been sown in the Celto-British monastery of Glastonbury. Except at the

[1] He is also called Beorchtwald, and Brithwald.—GUILL. MALMESB., *Gesta Reg.*, i. 29; HOOK, vol. i. p. 178.

[2] *Anglo-Saxon Chron.*, an. 690.

[3] "Ecclesiasticis simul ac monasterialibus disciplinis summe instructus, tametsi prædecessori minime comparandus."—BEDE, v. 8.

moment of the holy Archbishop Theodore's tardy confession and restitution, Wilfrid, from the beginning of his struggle with the Anglo-Saxon princes and prelates, seems never to have met with the least sympathy at Canterbury, the natural centre of Roman traditions and authority, and it was never thither that he went to seek a refuge in his troubles. Nothing more strongly proves to what a point national feeling already prevailed, not indeed over the power of love and respect for Catholic unity, but over all that would compromise, even in appearance, the interests or the self-love of the Anglo-Saxon Church. Abbot Adrian, the friend and companion of Theodore, like him charged by the Holy See to watch over the maintenance of English orthodoxy, and who survived the archbishop nearly twenty years,[1] never extended a friendly hand to the man who, not without good cause, declared himself the dauntless champion and innocent victim of Roman unity. The case was the same, as we have already seen, with the illustrious and holy abbot Benedict Biscop, the founder of several new foundations, entirely Roman in spirit and heart, in the country, and even in the very diocese of Wilfrid. Is it not necessary to conclude that Wilfrid appeared, at least to his most illustrious contemporaries, to go much too far in his zeal, and to mistake the indispensable conditions of religious peace in England?

However this may have been, the new archbishop (who, we may say in passing, holds a place among the saints of the English and Benedictine calendars[2]) soon formed an alliance with King Aldfrid. The resentment of this prince had not been disarmed, nor his resolution modified, either by the long exile of Wilfrid, or by the impunity with which Bishops Bosa[3] and John had since occupied the usurped

[1] He died in 710, having been thirty-nine years abbot of the monastery of St. Peter or of St. Augustin at Canterbury.

[2] Under the name of Brithwaldus or Brivaut, on 9th January.

[3] We have already said that this intruder figures among the English

sees of Hexham and York. Twelve years after the last expulsion of Wilfrid, the king convoked an assembly in the plain of Nesterfield, near the monastery of Ripon, which was one of the principal causes of the struggle. Almost all the British bishops were present, the Archbishop Berchtwald himself presided, and Wilfrid was invited to take part in the proceedings, under a promise that justice would be done him, according to the canon law. He came; but the promise was so far from being kept, that his presence was only made an occasion for heaping recriminations and accusations upon him. Certain bishops probably those who occupied the sees into which his diocese had been partitioned, distinguished themselves by their bitterness; they were supported by the king, and, it must be added, by several abbots, who perhaps disliked the Benedictine rule. An attempt was made to force him into an entire acceptance of all the statutes of the deceased archbishop. Wilfrid replied that he would do all they wished, provided it was agreeable to the canon law. Then turning upon his adversaries, he reproached them vehemently for the obstinacy with which for twenty-two years they had opposed the apostolic authority; he demanded under what pretence they dared to prefer the laws made by the archbishop during the division of the Church of England to the decrees of three popes specially delivered for the salvation of souls in Britain? While his adversaries deliberated over the wording of their minutes, a young man attached to the service of the king, but passionately devoted to Wilfrid, who had educated him along with many other young Saxon nobles, secretly left the royal tent, and, stealing in disguise through the crowd, warned Wilfrid that a treacherous attempt would be made to obtain his signature in approval of all the council might decree—a sort of blank resignation, by means of which he might be deprived of everything he had a law-

saints. Bede also calls him *Deo dilectus et sanctissimus*, v. 20. It must be remembered that he, as well as his colleague St. John of Beverley, had been trained in the school of the Abbess Hilda.

ful right to, whether bishoprics or monasteries, in Northumbria, Mercia, and all other places. "After which," said this secret friend, "nothing would be left for you but to give yourself up, and lose even your episcopal character in virtue of your own signature."[1] The actual event to which this warning referred is made known to us by the account given later by Wilfrid himself to the Pope. "I sat," he said, "in my place, with my abbots, priests, and deacons, when one of the bishops came to ask, in the name of the king and the archbishop, if I submitted to the archbishop's judgment, and if I was ready to obey what should be decreed with the consent of all, yes or no? I replied that I preferred to know, in the first place, the nature of the judgment before making any engagement. The bishop insisted, saying that he himself knew nothing, that the archbishop would say nothing until I had declared in a document signed by my hand, that I would submit to his judgment, without deviating to the right or left. I replied that I never had heard of such a proceeding, and that it was unheard-of to attempt to bind the conscience by an oath before it was known what the oath implied. However, I promised before all the assembly that I would obey with all my heart the sentence of the archbishop in everything that was not contrary to the statutes of the holy Fathers, to the canons, or to the council of the holy Pope Agathon and his orthodox successors."[2] Then the excitement rose to its height; the

[1] "Multæ ac magnæ altercationum quæstiones ab eis exortæ . . . consensu quorumdam abbatum qui pacem ecclesiarum, avaritia instigante, nullatenus habere concupiverunt. . . . Multis et duris sermonibus eorum pertinaciam increpavit ac interrogavit eos quo fronte auderent. . . . Unus ex ministris . . . quem ille a primævo vagentis ætatulæ incunabulo enutrivit, ex tentorio regis latenter erupit. . . . Hac fraude te moliuntur decipere, ut primitus per scriptionem propriæ manus confirmes eorum tantummodo judicium . . . ut postquam isto alligatus fueris districtionis vinculo, de cetero in posterum permutare nullatenus queas. . . . Ad postremum temetipsum donando, de tuo sanctitatis honore cum subscriptione degraderis."—EDDIUS, c. 44.

[2] "Eram in concilio sedens cum abbatibus meis. . . . Respondebam quæ

king and archbishop took advantage of it by a proposal to deprive Wilfrid of all that he possessed on either bank of the Humber, leaving him no shelter whatsoever in England. This extreme severity provoked a reaction in his favour, notwithstanding the double force of the royal and archiepiscopal authority. At last it was agreed to leave him the monastery which he had built at Ripon, on condition that he should sign a promise to live there peaceably, not to leave it without the permission of the king, and to give up the exercise of all episcopal functions.[1]

To this insulting proposal Wilfrid replied with an indignant eloquence, which his companion has well earned our gratitude by preserving for us. "By what right do you dare to abuse my weakness, force me to turn the murderer's sword against myself, and sign my own condemnation? How shall I, whom you accuse of no fault, make myself a scandal in the sight of all who know that for nearly forty years I have borne, though unworthy, the name of bishop? Was not I the first, after the death of those great men sent by St. Gregory, to root out the poisonous seeds sown by Scottish missionaries? Was it not I who converted and brought back the whole nation of the Northumbrians to the true Easter and the Roman tonsure, according to the laws of the Holy See? Was it not I who taught them the sweet harmonies of the primitive Church, in the responses and chants of the two alternate choirs? Was it not I who constituted monastic life among them, after the order of St. Benedict, which no one had before introduced? And after all this, I am now to express with my own hand a sudden condemnation of myself, with no crime whatever upon my

erat illius judicii sententia, scire prius oportet, quam confiteamur, utrum pati ea valemus exsequendo, an aliter. . . . Istius tam angustam districtionis coarctationem nunquam antea a quoquam hominum coactam audivi." —EDDIUS, c. 50.

[1] "Ut nec in Ultra-Umbrensium regno, nec in Merciorum minimam quidem unius domunculæ portiunculam haberet. Hujus judicii inclementia ab archiepiscopo et rege diffinita."—EDDIUS, c. 50.

conscience! As for this new persecution, by which you try to violate the sacred character with which I am invested, I appeal boldly to the Holy See. I invite any of you who desire my deposition to go there with me to receive the decision. The sages of Rome must learn the causes for which you would degrade me, before I bend to your sole will."[1] At these words the king and the archbishop cried out, "He is guilty by his own acknowledgment. He is worthy to be condemned, if only because he prefers the judgment of Rome to ours—a foreign tribunal to that of his own country." And the king added, "If you desire it, my father, I will compel him to submit by force. At least for once let him accept our sentence." The archbishop said nothing against this proposal; but the other bishops reminded the king of the safe-conduct he had promised—"Let him go home quietly, as we shall all do." Such clumsy violence, addressed to objects of controversy so out of date, may no doubt cause the learned and the victorious of our days to smile; but the spirit manifested in the war made upon Wilfrid by the king and bishops is one which is never out of date. It is impossible not to be struck by the singular analogy between the means thus used and those that have been employed ever since to obtain the triumph of a bad cause. It is even astonishing to perceive the clear-sightedness with which the Anglo-Saxons, both laymen and

[1] "Constanter et intrepida voce elevata. . . . Qua ex causa me compellitis ut tam lugubri calamitatis miseria in memetipsum gladium diræ interfectionis . . . convertam? Nonne si aliquo reatu suspicionis offendiculum faciam? nonne et ego primus post obitum priorum procerum a sancto Gregorio directorum, curavi ut Scoticæ virulenta plantationis germina eradicarem . . . aut quomodo juxta ritum primitivæ Ecclesiæ consono vocis modulamine binis adstantibus choris persultare . . . instruerem? Et nunc contra me quomodo subitam damnationis ipse protulero, extra conscientiam alicujus facinoris, sententiam? Fiducialiter sedem appello apostolicam. . . . Modo utique culpabilis factus a nobis notatus damnetur, quod magis illorum, quam nostrum elegit judicium."—EDDIUS, c. 44. "Si præcipis, pater, opprimam eum per violentiam."—GUILL. MALMESB., 151, b.

ecclesiastics, divined and availed themselves of weapons which seemed reserved for a more advanced state of civilisation. Persecution and confiscation are of all ages; but it is a striking proof of the precocious intelligence of the Anglo-Saxons of the seventh century that they thus stigmatised as a crime and anti-national preference for foreigners that instinct and natural law which induces every victim of oppression or violence to seek justice where it is free and independent; and, above all, that they had recourse to that fine invention of a blank signature, a blind assent to the will of another, wrung from those who had been skilfully reduced to the formidable alternative of a Yes or a No. And yet the men who worked by such means were neither impious nor rascally. On the contrary, King Aldfrid ranks among the most enlightened and justly popular princes of his time. The archbishop, and most of the bishops who persecuted Wilfrid, have been, and still are, venerated among the saints. The only conclusion to which we can come is, that the instincts of despotism exist always and everywhere in the human heart, and that unless vigorously restrained and curbed by laws and institutions, they break out even in the best, choosing the same forms, laying the same snares, producing the same baseness, inspiring the same violences, perversities, and treacheries.

It was not without difficulty that, after the dispersion of the assembly of Nesterfield, the noble old man escaped from the violence of his enemies, and returned to Mercia to his faithful friend King Ethelred. When Wilfrid had repeated all the threats and insults with which the bishops had loaded him: "And you," said he to the king, "how do you intend to act towards me with regard to the lands and goods you have given me?" "I," replied the honest Ethelred, "I shall certainly do nothing to add to so great a wrong; nor, above all, to injure the monastic life which now flourishes in our great abbey of St. Mary;[1] I shall on the

[1] The king thus designated the abbey of Peterborough, first called

contrary maintain it as long as I live, and will change nothing of what I have been able to do by the grace of God, until I have sent to Rome ambassadors who will accompany you, and take with them my deeds of gift. I hope they will there do me the justice deserved by a man who desires no other recompense."[1]

But while the generous Ethelred thus promised and continued his protection to the persecuted bishop and to the monks of the Burg of St. Peter, who had always so deeply interested him, the king of Northumbria and his adherents redoubled their violence and their anger. Sentence of excommunication was pronounced against the monks of Ripon, because of their fidelity to the cause of their founder, who was at the same time their abbot and bishop. Poor Eddi, who was one of them, relates with indignation how the spoilers, not content with invading the patrimony of Wilfrid, showed and excited everywhere, against his disciples and partisans, the horror which attached to excommunicated persons. Food or drink which had been blessed by a monk or priest of Wilfrid's party was thrown away as if it had been offered to idols; and every cup or other utensil touched by a Wilfridian had to be washed and purified before it could be used by these pretenders to orthodoxy.[2]

The unfortunate excommunicated monks of Ripon, to whom the result of the Assembly of Nesterfield was communicated by the invectives and outrages of which they

Medehampstede, and situated on the borders of Mercia and East Anglia, in the fenny country, where at the same period arose Ely, Croyland, Thorney, &c.

[1] "Majorem non addo perturbationem, destruendo monachorum vitam . . . usquequo prius tecum nuntios proprios vel scripta proprietatis ad Romam præmisero interrogare de his imminentibus causis, quomodo recta desiderans salvus inveniar."—EDDIUS, c. 45.

[2] "In tantum communionem nostram exsecraverunt, ut si quispiam . . . refectionem suam . . . signo crucis Dei benediceret, foras projiciendam ac effundendam, quasi idolo-lythum judicabant: et vasa de quibus nostri vescebantur, lavari prius, quasi sorde polluta jubebant, antequam ab aliis contingerentur."—EDDIUS, c. 46.

were the object, consoled themselves as they best could by redoubling their prayers and austerities, and praying night and day, in sorrowful union with all the other Wilfridian monasteries, for their aged and courageous father, who was again about to undertake the long and laborious journey to Rome.[1] Thus Wilfrid again set out, as he had done three times before, to seek enlightenment and justice from the successor of St. Peter. A party of faithful monks accompanied him; but he had no longer the stately train of former days, and it was on foot that he crossed the immense space which divided him from Rome.[2] And how many other changes were there since his first journey, when the young favourite of Queen Eanfleda travelled, with all the eagerness of a youth of twenty, towards the Eternal City! He was now seventy: he was a bishop, and had been so for forty years, but a bishop robbed of his possessions, expelled from his diocese for the third time, misunderstood, persecuted, calumniated, not only by the wicked and tyrants, but by his brethren in the episcopate, by his hierarchical superior, and by his countrymen. The old saints, the old kings, the good and holy queens, who had encouraged his first steps in the apostolic life, had disappeared, and with them how many friends, how many brothers in arms, how many disciples prematurely snatched from his paternal hopes! Not only the delightful illusions of youth, but also the generous persistence of manhood, had been compelled to give place in his soul to the consciousness of treason and ingratitude and failure—failure a hundred times proved of his efforts, yet a hundred times renewed in behalf of truth, justice, and honour.

Nevertheless he went on and persevered; he held high his white head in the midst of the storm; he was as ardent, eloquent, resolute, and unconquerable in his old age as in

[1] "Die noctuque clamantes, in jejunio et fletu cum omnibus subjectis nostris congregationibus fundentes precem."—EDDIUS, c. 47.

[2] "Pedestri gressu."—EDDIUS, c. 47.

the first days of his youth. Nothing in him betrayed fatigue, discouragement, vexation, nor even sadness.

Thus he pressed on, and, after a second stay in Friesland,[1] crossed the countries of Neustria, Austrasia, and Lombardy, all agitated and eaten up, like other nations, by the struggles and passions of this world; all wasted, desolated, and ruled by the wild license of military and material force. He advanced into the midst of them, bearing in his heart and on his countenance the love of law, a law purely spiritual, which swayed souls, which addressed hearts, and which alone could overcome, regulate, and pacify all those new and different races—a law which can never perish, but which from age to age, even to the end of the world, will inspire in its champions the same courage, constancy, and fervour, which burned in the heart of the aged Wilfrid during his long and fatiguing journey. He was going to Rome, but what might be his reception there? Would any recollection still remain of the brave young pilgrim of the time of St. Martin, the last martyr Pope? or of the victorious and admired bishop of the time of St. Agathon, the Benedictine Pope? Five other Popes had occupied the chair of St. Peter since Agathon.[2] During this long interval, no mark of sympathy, no aid had come from Rome to Wilfrid in all his struggles and sufferings for the cause which he loved to regard as that of the Roman Church and its law, authority, and discipline. And the apostolic throne at this moment was occupied by John VI., a Greek, countryman of that Theodore who had cost Wilfrid so many contradictions and trials.

[1] It is only at this period of Wilfrid's life that I can place his residence in Friesland with his pupil Willibrord, whose successor, Acca, entertained Bede, and of whom the latter speaks in his *Ecclesiastical History*, book iii. chap. 3.

[2] Leo II., Benedict II., John IV., Conon, Sergius I. From a passage of Wilfrid's speech at Nesterfield, it appears that Popes Benedict II. and Sergius had interposed in his favour, but no trace of their acts on the subject has been preserved.

It was to this pontiff that he and his companion presented, on their knees, their memorial, declaring that they came to accuse no one, but to defend themselves against accusations, by flying to the foot of his glorious see as to the bosom of a mother, and submitting themselves beforehand to all that his authority might prescribe. Accusers could not have been wanting, for there soon arrived envoys from the holy Archbishop Berchtwald, with a written denunciation of Wilfrid.[1] The Pope inquired into the matter in a council at which many bishops and all the Roman clergy were present. Eddi, who must have accompanied his bishop to Rome this time also, has preserved the details in full. Wilfrid perceived the necessity of being conciliatory and moderate in his pretensions, and restrained his ambition within the bounds of a humble prayer. He read before the assembly a paper, in which he recalled to its recollection the decrees given in his favour by Popes Agathon, Benedict, and Sergius, and demanded the execution of them in his own name and in that of the monks who had accompanied him to Rome. He then entreated the Pope to recommend King Ethelred to guarantee to him, against all covetousness or enmity, the monasteries and domains which he held from the Mercian kings for the redemption of their souls. Finally, in case the complete execution of the Pontifical decrees, which had ordained his reinstatement in his bishopric and in all his patrimony, should appear too hard to the king of Northumbria, the generous old man consented to give up his diocese of York, with all the monasteries depending on it, to be disposed of at the Pope's pleasure, except his two beloved foundations of Ripon and Hexham, which he asked to be allowed to retain, with all their possessions. In another sitting the messengers of Berchtwald were heard

[1] "Neminem per invidiam accusandum advenimus. . . . Interim legati a sancto archiepiscopo Berchtvaldo cum suis scriptis accusationis directis . . . pervenerunt."—EDDIUS, c. 47.

in their turn. They declared, as their chief accusation, that Bishop Wilfrid, in full council at Nesterfield, had cast contempt upon the decrees of the Archbishop of Canterbury, whom the Holy See had placed at the head of all the churches of Great Britain. Then Wilfrid rose, and, with all the authority he derived from his venerable age, related what had really occurred. His tale gained the sympathies of the whole assembly; and the bishops, while showing the most amiable aspect to the friends of Wilfrid, began to talk Greek among themselves, so as not to be understood by the English.[1] They then addressed the Canterbury envoys as follows: "You know, dear brethren, that those who do not prove their chief accusation ought not to be allowed to prove the rest; however, to do honour to the archbishop-legate, and to this holy bishop Wilfrid, we will examine the matter fundamentally in all its details."

And, in fact, they held, during four months, seventy sittings. This was certainly giving a scrupulous, and, it may be said, amazing attention to a cause which may have appeared to the Italian bishops as but of secondary and far-off interest; and nothing better proves the conscientious solicitude brought by the Church of Rome to bear on the judgment of all causes submitted to her, as well as her unquestionable authority. Wilfrid appeared before his judges almost daily, and underwent a minute examination.[2] In these debates the aged orator displayed all the vigour and energy of his youth. He overturned by a word the most unforeseen objections of his accusers; with a presence of mind, which God and the truth alone could have inspired, he swept away their arguments like spiders' webs: it was a true torrent of eloquence, as says a monastic historian who,

[1] "Stans episcopus noster, venerabili senio confectus, cum fratribus suis venerabilibus in conspectu totius congregationis. . . . Tunc inter se græcizantes et subridentes nos . . . loqui cœperunt."

[2] "Per quatuor menses et septuaginta conciliabula sanctissimæ sedis, de fornace ignis . . . purificatus evasit. Pene quotidie in conflictu diligenter examinatus."—EDDIUS, c. 50, 52.

many centuries after, was still proud of the effect produced by the words of the old Saxon bishop upon the astonished Romans.[1] Nothing contributed more to the ultimate triumph of Wilfrid than the discovery, made in studying the precedents of the case, of his presence at the council held against the Monothelites twenty-four years before.[2] In the course of reading the acts of the former council, which was done by order of the Pope, in presence not only of the clergy but also of the nobles and people of Rome, when they came to a passage which proved the presence of Wilfrid, then as now accused, but triumphantly acquitted, and admitted to bear witness to the faith of the other bishops of Great Britain, the assembly was confounded, the reader stopped short, and each man asked himself who this other Wilfrid was.[3] Then Boniface, an old counsellor of the Pope, who had lived in the time of Agathon, declared that the Wilfrid who was thus again brought to their bar was assuredly the same Wilfrid whom Pope Agathon had formerly acquitted and placed by his side as a man of irreproachable faith and life. When this was understood, the Pope and all the others declared that a man who had been forty years a bishop, instead of being persecuted in this manner, ought to be sent back with honour to his own country; and the sentence of absolution was unanimously pronounced.

The Pope summed up and terminated the entire discussion in a letter to the two kings of Northumbria and Mercia. After having reminded them of the sentence given

[1] "Mirantibus Romanis . . . illius eloquentiam, dum quicquid accusationum objecissent, ille nullo excogitato responso, sed Dei et veritatis fultus auxilio, quasi casses aranearum primo motu labiorum discuteret et subrueret . . . venerandum senem . . . torrentem eloquentiæ."—GUILL. MALMESB., f. 152.

[2] See page 42.

[3] "Cum ergo causa exigente synodus eadem coram nobilibus et frequentia populi jubente apostolico diebus aliquot legeretur, ventum est ad locum ubi scriptum erat *Wilfridus Deo amabilis*, etc. Quod ubi lectum est, stupor adprehendit audientes: et silente lectore, cœperunt alterutrum requirere quis esset ille Wilfridus episcopus."—BEDE, v. 20.

by Pope Agathon, and described the regularity of the new trial over which he had himself presided, he enjoined Archbishop Berchtwald to convoke a council along with Bishop Wilfrid, to summon Bishops Bosa and John (who occupied the usurped sees of York and Hexham), and after having heard them, to end the differences between them, if he could; if not, to send them to the Holy See to be tried by a more numerous council, under pain, for the recalcitrants, of being deposed and rejected by all bishops and by all the faithful. "Let your royal and Christian majesties," said the Pope in conclusion, "for the fear of God, and for love of that peace which our Lord left to His disciples, lend us your help and assistance, that those matters into which, by the inspiration of God, we have fully examined, may have their due effect; and may the recompense of so religious a work avail you in heaven, when, after a prosperous reign on earth, you enter among the happy company of the eternal kingdom."[1]

Wilfrid thus issued from what his friend calls the furnace in which God completed his purification. He and his followers thought themselves the victors; and although the sentence against his adversaries was neither severe nor definite, the sequel showed clearly that it was all the state of the English mind could endure. It was even Wilfrid's desire, instead of availing himself of the Pope's decision, to remain in Rome and end his days in penitence. He obeyed, however, when the Pope and council constrained him to set out, forbidding him, at the same time, to continue the cold baths which he had every night imposed upon himself as a mortification; and after visiting for the last time all the sanctuaries which were so dear to him, he left Rome, carrying with him a new provision of relics and of rich sacerdotal vestments for the Saxon churches.

[1] "Omnia quæque in scriptis, vel anterioribus, vel modernis, partes detulerunt, vel hic inveniri potuerunt, vel a partibus verbaliter dicta sunt, subtiliter inquisita, ad cognitionem nostram perducta sunt. . . . Vestra proinde Christiana et regalis Sublimitas . . . subventum faciat atque concursum."

He made the return journey not on foot, but on horseback; which, however, was too much for his old age; and this new journey through Italy, the Alps, and France, added to his many travels, affected him so much, that he fell dangerously ill before reaching his destination. After this he had to be carried in a litter, and arrived, apparently dying, at Meaux. There he lay for four days and nights, his eyes closed, neither speaking nor eating, and in a state of apparent unconsciousness; his breathing alone showed that he still lived. On the fifth day he raised himself in his bed, and seeing round him a crowd of monks, who chanted the psalms, weeping, he said, "Where is my priest Acca?"[1] This was a monk of Lindisfarne, of great learning and fervour, and an excellent musician, who, though educated by one of the rivals of Wilfrid, the intruding Bishop of York, had left his first master to follow Wilfrid for love of Roman orthodoxy, and had accompanied him to Rome on this last and laborious journey.[2] Seeing his master thus revived, Acca fell on his knees with all present to thank God. Then they talked together with holy awe of the last judgment. On which Wilfrid, having sent away all the rest of his attendants, said to Acca, "I have just had a vision which I will only confide to you, and of which I forbid you to speak until I know the will of God regarding it. A being clothed in white has appeared to me; he told me that he was the Archangel Michael, sent to tell me that

[1] "Feretro portatus . . . tantum halitus et calida membra vivum demonstrabant . . . resedit, apertisque oculis vidit circa se choros psaltentium simul et fluentium fratrum. . . . Ubi est Acca presbyter?"—EDDIUS, c. 53; BEDE, v. 29.

[2] "Doctissimus . . . castissimus . . . in ecclesiasticæ institutionis regulis . . . solertissimus, cantator peritissimus . . . deinde ad Wilfridum episcopum spe melioris proposita adveniens . . . cum quo etiam Romam veniens, multa illic quæ in patria nequiverat, Ecclesiæ sanctæ institutis utilia didicit."—BEDE, v. 20. Bede dedicated his *Hexameron* to Acca, who first became Abbot and then Bishop of Hexham after Wilfrid, and died only in 740. He has a place among the saints, and his miracles are told among those of Wilfrid.—*Act. SS. O. S. B.*, vol. iii. p. 204-220.

God had spared my life in answer to the prayers and tears of my brethren and my children, as well as to the intervention of the Holy Virgin His Mother.[1] He added that I should yet live several years, and should die in my own country, and in peace, after having regained the greater part of that which has been taken from me." And in fact he did recover, and pursued his journey without any further hindrance.

As soon as he landed in England, he caused his return to be announced to the Archbishop of Canterbury, who, already informed by his envoys of Wilfrid's success at Rome, yielded to apostolic authority, was sincerely reconciled to him, and promised to pronounce the revocation of the decrees of the Assembly of Nesterfield. They had a friendly interview near London, in presence of a multitude of abbots from various monasteries of Wilfrid's party.[2] From London Wilfrid went to Mercia, but not to find his friend Ethelred on the throne. The preceding year, in the very midst of Wilfrid's labours at Rome, his old friend had made up his mind to exchange the cares of royalty for the peace of the cloister, and had become a monk at Bardeney, in the monastery where his wife, Ostryda of Northumbria, assassinated seven years before by the Mercian lords, had, not without difficulty, succeeded in placing the relics of her uncle, the holy King Oswald.[3]

[1] "Visio mihi modo tremenda apparuit. . . . Adstitit mihi quidam . . . dicens se Michaelem archangelum."—BEDE, v. 19. It was to commemorate this intercession of the Mother of God that Wilfrid on his return to Hexham caused the Church of St. Mary to be erected, of which some remains may be seen near the great church of the ancient priory; it was of a form quite new in England: "Ecclesiam construxerat opere rotundo, quam quatuor porticus, quatuor respicientes mundi climata, ambiebant." —ÆLREDUS, *De Sanctis Ecclesiæ Hagulstadensis*, c. 5.

[2] "Apostolica auctoritate coactus, et per nuntios suos directis scriptis territus et tremebundus, pacifice et sine simulatione (sicut rei eventus probavit) sancto pontifici nostro reconciliatus est."—EDDIUS, c. 54.

[3] See vol. iii. p. 367, the resistance of the Mercian monks to the religious practices of the Northumbrian king.

Ethelred, who had as yet no saint in his own family, thus found a patron both powerful and popular in England and even elsewhere,[1] in the family of his wife; and it was beside the relics of this venerated uncle that he decided to end his life after a reign of nearly thirty-one years. There Wilfrid sought him; and finding his old friend, his generous host, and faithful protector, clad in the same monastic habit as himself, and weeping for joy at his return, Wilfrid threw himself into his arms; and the two clasped each other in this embrace in one of those moments of perfect union and sympathy which God sometimes grants to two generous hearts which have together struggled and suffered in His cause.[2]

The bishop then showed the king the Pope's letter addressed to him, which contained the apostolic judgment, with the bulls and seals all in order. Ethelred, having read it, cried, "I will neither infringe it nor allow it to be infringed in the smallest particular while I live; I will support it with all my power." He immediately sent for his nephew, who had succeeded him on the Mercian throne, told him of the Pope's decision, and conjured him to execute it fully in everything connected with the Wilfridian monasteries in their kingdom. The new king promised willingly, with all the eagerness of a man already inclined to that monastic life which he afterwards embraced in his own person.

But Wilfrid was not at the end of his troubles. Mercia had always been to him a friendly and hospitable country. It was a different matter in Northumbria. Ethelred advised him to send to Aldfrid two monks whom the king favoured, an abbot and the professor of theology at Ripon, to inquire whether he would receive Bishop Wilfrid with the verdict

[1] In Friesland and Ireland.—BEDE, iii. 13.

[2] "Ad Ethelredum . . . semper fidelissimum amicum, nimirum pro nimio gaudio lachrymantem. . . . Mitissime eum salutavit, osculantes et amplexantes se invicem; honorifice ab amico more suo susceptus erat."—EDDIUS, c. 54. Cf. BEDE, v. 19.

given at Rome. The king at first made an evasive answer, but on his second interview with these ambassadors, by the advice of his counsellors, he refused. "Dear and venerable brothers," he said to them, "ask what you will for yourselves, and I will give it you willingly; but do not ask anything in behalf of your master Wilfrid; he was judged in the first place by my predecessors in concert with Archbishop Theodore and their counsellors, and afterwards by myself, with the concurrence of another archbishop sent by the Holy See, and almost all the bishops of the country; so long as I live I will change nothing out of regard to what you call a mandate of the Holy See."[1] This speech sounds like an anticipation of the famous *Nolumus leges Angliæ mutare* of the English barons in the days of the Plantagenets.

"As long as I live," said King Aldfrid; but he had not long to live. He soon after fell dangerously ill, and believed himself smitten by God, and punished for his contempt of apostolic authority. He openly confessed his sin against Wilfrid, expressed a desire to receive a visit from him before his death, and vowed, if he recovered, to conform to the desires of the bishop and the sentence of the Pope. "If it be the will of God," said he, "that I should die, I command my successor, whosoever he may be, in the name of the Lord, for the repose of my soul and his own, to make peace with Wilfrid."[2] Many witnesses heard these words, and chief among them his sister, Princess Elfleda, abbess of Whitby, who, since the death of her other brother Egfrid, twenty years before, had been completely won to the interests of

[1] "Sicut consiliarii ejus persuaserunt. . . . O fratres, mihi ambo venerabiles . . . quia quod ante prædecessores mei reges et archiepiscopus cum consiliariis suis censuerunt, et quod postea nos cum archiepiscopo ab apostolica sede emisso . . . judicavimus: hoc, inquam, quamdiu vixero, propter apostolicæ sedis (ut dicitis) scripta, nunquam volo mutare."—EDDIUS, c. 55.

[2] "Præcipio in nomine Domini, quicumque mihi in regnum successerit, ut cum Wilfrido episcopo pro remedio animæ meæ et suæ pacem et concordiam ineat."—EDDIUS, c. 56.

Wilfrid.[1] Soon afterwards Aldfrid lost the power of speech and died. He left none but young children, and the Northumbrian crown descended to a prince named Eadwulf. Wilfrid, who had already returned to Ripon, and who, it is not known why, counted on the new king's favour, was preparing to go to him, when Eadwulf, by the advice of his counsellors, and perhaps of the Witena-Gemot, which had misled Aldfrid, gave him to understand that if he did not leave Northumbria within six days, all his followers who could be seized should be put to death.[2]

But the prosperous days of Northumbria were over, and civil wars were about to destroy the order and prosperity which had reigned there since the establishment of national independence during the great reign of Oswy. Bernicia revolted in the name of the eldest son of Aldfrid. This was a child of eight years old, named Osred, who was already considered as the adopted son of Wilfrid.[3] By means of some mysterious influence, the nature of which is unknown, the aged exile Wilfrid, who had been expelled from the country for fourteen years, and was to all appearance forgotten, betrayed, and set aside, became all at once the master of the situation, and the arbiter of events.

He soon acquired a more powerful protector than the young sovereign in the person of an ealdorman named Bertfrid, who was considered the most powerful noble in the kingdom, and who was at the head of Osred's party. King Eadwulf marched against the insurgents, and obliged them to retreat to the fortress of Bamborough, capital of the first Northumbrian kings, near the holy isle of Lindisfarne. Bertfrid and his men, shut up in the narrow enclosure

[1] "Ælfleda abbatissa et sapientissima virgo, quæ est vere filia regis." —EDDIUS, c. 56.

[2] "Persuasus a consiliariis suis. . . . Per salutem meam juro, nisi de regno meo in spatio sex dierum discesserit, de sodalibus ejus quoscumque invenero, morte peribunt."—EDDIUS, c. 56.

[3] "Regnavit puer regius . . . et sancto pontifici nostro filius adoptivus factus est."

of this fortified rock, were reduced to the last extremity, and not knowing what saint to invoke, they made a vow that, if God would deliver them, and give to their young prince the throne of his father, they would fulfil exactly the judgment of the Holy See regarding their aged bishop.[1] Scarcely had this vow been solemnly taken by the besieged when a change took place in the minds of their assailants. A number of Eadwulf's followers forsook him and came to an understanding with Bertfrid, who made a sally at the head of his garrison, by which Eadwulf was vanquished, dethroned, and himself exiled, after a short reign of two months over the kingdom from which he had brutally expelled the venerable bishop.

As soon as the royal child was placed on the throne, the Archbishop of Canterbury made his appearance, perceiving that the time was come for executing the apostolic judgment, and definitely settling Wilfrid's affairs in a general assembly. This was held in the open air on the banks of the Nid, a river which flows a little to the south of the fertile plain in which Wilfrid's abbey of Ripon was situated. The council was composed of the three bishops who shared among them the diocese of Wilfrid, and of all the abbots and nobles of Northumbria; it was presided over by the archbishop, who had the king by his side. Wilfrid too was present, and met there his two powerful adherents, Bertfrid and the abbess Elfleda. This noble and sainted princess, sister of the three last kings of Northumbria, and sister-in-law of two neighbouring kings, those of East Anglia and Mercia, was yet more influential on account of her virtues than of her birth. All the Northumbrians regarded her as the consoler and best counsellor of the kingdom. The archbishop opened the sitting with these words, "Let us pray

[1] "Undique circumcincti hostili manu in angustiaque rupis lapideæ mansimus; inito consilio inter nos, si Deus nostro regali puero regnum patris cui concessisset, quæ mandavit sancta apostolica auctoritas de sancto Wilfrido episcopo adimplere, Deo spopondimus."—EDDIUS, c. 57.

the Holy Spirit to send peace and concord into all our hearts. The blessed Wilfrid and myself have brought you the letter which the Holy See has addressed to me by his hands, and which shall now be read to you."[1] He then read the pontifical decrees delivered in the different councils at Rome. A dead silence followed; on which Bertfrid, who was universally recognised as the first personage in the kingdom after the king, said, "We do not understand Latin, and we beg that you will translate to us the apostolic message."[2] The archbishop undertook the necessary translation, and made all understand that the Pope ordered the bishops to restore to Wilfrid his churches, or that all parties should go to Rome to be judged there, under pain of excommunication and deposition to all opposers, lay or ecclesiastical, even including the king himself.[3] Nevertheless the three bishops[4] (all of whom have places among saints) did not hesitate to combat this decision, appealing to the decrees made by King Egfrid and Archbishop Theodore, and to those of the Assembly of Nesterfield, under Aldfrid. At this point the holy abbess Elfleda interposed: in a voice which all listened to as an utterance from heaven, she described the last illness and agony of the king her brother, and how he had vowed to God and St. Peter to accomplish all the decrees he had before rejected. "This," she said, "is the last will of Aldfrid the king; I attest the truth of it before Christ." Bertfrid afterwards spoke in the name of the king, commencing thus: "The desire of the king and nobles is, in all

[1] "Rex cum totius regni sui principibus et tres episcopi ejus cum abbatibus, nec non et beata Eanfleda abbatissa semper totius provinciæ consolatrix, optimaque consiliatrix . . . sedentibus in loco sydodali. . . . Habemus, enim ego et beatus Wilfridus episcopus, scripta apostolica."—EDDIUS, c. 57.

[2] "Nos qui interpretatione indigemus."

[3] "Si quis contemnens . . . sciat se, si rex sit aut laicus, a corpore et sanguine Christi excommunicatum: si vero episcopus aut presbyter . . . ab omni gradu ecclesiastico degradari."

[4] These three bishops were, Bosa of York, John of Hexham, and Eadfrid of Lindisfarne, bishop since 698.

things, to obey the commandment of the Holy See and of King Aldfrid."[1] He then related the history of the siege of Bamborough, and the vow which bound the consciences of the victors.

Nevertheless the three bishops would not yield; they retired from the assembly to confer among themselves, and with Archbishop Berchtwald, but above all with the sagacious Elfleda. Thanks to her, and thanks also to the extreme moderation of Wilfrid, who required only the minimum of the conditions imposed at Rome, all ended in a general reconciliation. It was decreed that there should be perpetual peace and alliance between the Northumbrian bishops, the king, and the thanes on one side, and Bishop Wilfrid on the other; but that Wilfrid should content himself with his two best monasteries, and the large possessions attached to them—that is, with Ripon, where no new bishopric had been erected, and Hexham, into the see of which he entered; its late titular holder, John of Beverley, being, by a fresh concession made for the sake of peace, removed to York.[2]

As soon as the treaty was concluded, the five bishops embraced, and received the holy communion together. The assembly dispersed amidst general rejoicing, which soon spread all over Northumbria. The most inveterate enemies of Wilfrid were glad of a peace which gave repose to their consciences. But the cloisters and arches of the Wilfridian monasteries echoed with the voice of a more enthusiastic gladness, receiving back again multitudes of disciples and monks, some of whom had been dispersed by persecution and exile, some enslaved by detested masters, who hastened with

[1] "Episcopi vero resistentes . . . beatissima Elfleda abbatissima benedicto suo ore dicebat: Vere in Christo dico testamentum Aldfridi regis. Præfatus regis princeps, respondens dixit: Hæc est voluntas regis et principum ejus."

[2] It is not known what the arrangement was in respect to Bosa, the intruding Bishop of York, who died most opportunely about this time.—BEDE, v. 3. As to the bishopric of Lindisfarne, it remained in the hands of the new titular, Bishop Eadfrid.

delight to find themselves once more under the sway of a father whom all the world henceforth considered as a saint, and who had always possessed the faculty of inspiring a passionate affection in his children.[1]

This was the last act of Wilfrid's public life. It began in that famous assembly where the Celtic Church was bound by his youthful and vigorous influence to the feet of Roman tradition—an assembly which partook at once of the character of a council and a parliament, presided over by King Oswy, in presence of the Abbess St. Hilda, and held at her monastery. He ended his career, after forty years of unwearied struggles, in another assembly of the same kind, held in presence of the grandson of Oswy, and influenced in the highest degree by another abbess of Whitby, the gentle Elfleda, who was, like Hilda, a saint and a princess of that Northumbrian dynasty with the destinies of which those of Wilfrid were so intimately connected.

It is impossible not to be struck by the great and singular influence exercised over the destiny of Wilfrid by women, or, to speak more correctly, by the Anglo-Saxon princesses whose contemporary he was. It is a peculiarity found in the history of no other saint, and which few historic personages manifest to the same degree. Many, such as St. Paulinus, St. Jerome, St. Augustin, St. Francis d'Assisi, St. François de Sales, St. Jean de la Croix, have owed to their wives, their mothers, their sisters, and their spiritual friends, a portion of their glory and some of their best inspirations; but we know none whose life has been so completely transformed or modified by the affection or the hatred of women. He was protected in his youth and seconded in his monastic vocation by the grand-daughter of St. Clotilda, who then shared the throne of Northumbria; and it was by encourag-

[1] "Reddentes ei duo optima cœnobia . . . cum omnibus redditibus suis. . . . Et hæc est maxima beatitudo ex utraque parte, tam illorum . . . quam nostrorum, qui per diversa exsilia dispersi, tristes sub alienis dominis servi eramus, nunc enim . . . capite charissimo . . . gaudentes et exultantes in benedictione vivimus."

ing another queen of that country, St. Etheldreda, to change her married life for that of the cloister, that he drew upon himself his first misfortune. A third queen of Northumbria, whom he had indirectly aided to take the place of his spiritual daughter, Etheldreda, persecuted him for two years with a bitterness which she communicated to her sister the queen of Wessex, and her sister-in-law the queen of Mercia; and the three together, uniting their efforts, used their influence with the kings their husbands to aggravate the distresses of the proscribed bishop, until the time when the queen of the pagan Saxons of the South, herself a Christian, secured him an asylum, and offered him a nation to convert.

Those princesses who had forsaken the life of the world to govern great monastic communities were not less mingled with his stormy career. The abbess-queen of Ely, St. Etheldreda, continued to follow his counsels in the cloister as on the throne. St. Hilda, the abbess of Whitby, pursued him with an enmity as constant as the affection of her niece; while St. Ebba, the abbess of Coldingham, interfered in his favour, and delivered him from a painful captivity. It has just been seen how St. Elfleda, the sister and daughter of the four Northumbrian kings under whom he had lived, after inheriting the crosier of St. Hilda, came forward as the advocate and protectress of the prelate, contributing more than any other to his last triumph. Finally, he himself, when more than seventy years old, and on his deathbed, left his last vestments to her whom he called "his abbess," to Cyndreda, who owes her place in the history of the Church and the history of souls to this latest homage of the aged champion of Rome and of spiritual independence.

CHAPTER VI

THE LAST YEARS OF WILFRID.—705–709

Wilfrid's illness assembles all the abbots of his monasteries about him.—He divides his treasures: his farewell to the monks of Ripon.—His last journey to Mercia.—He consecrates the church of Evesham monastery.—Bishop Egwin of Worcester and the smiths.—Vision of the three virgins in the forest.—Simon de Montfort, creator of the House of Commons, buried at Evesham.—Wilfrid narrates all his life to his successor Tatbert.—His death.—His funeral at Ripon.—His worship and his miracles.—He appears with St. Cuthbert to relieve Hexham against the Scots: the Christian Dioscuri.—His banner appears at the battle of the Standard.—Services which he rendered to the monastic order, to the Church of England, to the universal Church, to the English nation. (Note on the Culdees of York.)—He begins that long succession of pontiff-confessors which has no rival out of the Church of England.—His character.

WILFRID passed the four last years of his life in peace at his monastery of Hexham, which had, though not by his will, become a cathedral and the seat of a diocese, the last of those of which he had been successively bishop.[1] As he travelled on one occasion from Hexham to Ripon, he was attacked by a sudden faint, even more serious than that which seized him at Meaux. He was carried into a house on the roadside, and there ensued a scene which proves the love with which he was regarded, and how it was at once a bishop, a king, and a father whom his great and powerful monastic family was about to lose. At the first report of his illness all the abbots of his numerous monasteries, and even the anchorites who had gone out from his foundations, hurried to Hexham. Distance was no obstacle to them;

[1] York in 665, Lindisfarne 678, Lichfield 681, and Hexham in 705.

they travelled day and night, questioning every passer-by, and continuing their course with hastened steps or saddened hearts according as the answer they received told them that their father was yet living, or that they would arrive too late. It was the desire of all to see once again their master and beloved father, and to join their prayers and tears to those of the community, that he might be permitted to regain consciousness, and to put his succession in order by dividing his property, and naming the future superiors of all his houses;[1] for his influence was everywhere so great that the monks had given up their right to elect their own chiefs, which was, however, one of the constitutional principles of the Benedictine order. Their prayers were heard. Wilfrid recovered; but considering himself to have been thus warned that the time fixed by the archangel in his vision at Meaux would soon expire, he occupied himself in putting all his affairs in order, in preparation for his death. When he arrived at Ripon, he had the door of his treasury opened by the official who kept the keys, in presence of the two abbots of his monasteries in Mercia, and of eight of the most devout monks. It is curious to note the inexperience of the persecutors and spoilers of those remote times, which is shown by the fact that, after his two periods of exile, his condemnations, and his long absence, this treasury, left in the keeping of a few monks and often of unfriendly superiors, in the midst of a country whose government had been for thirty years at constant war with Wilfrid, still contained treasure enough to make up four large portions of gold, silver, and precious stones. "My dearest brothers," said Wilfrid to the ten witnesses of his last wishes, "I have thought for some time of returning yet once more to that

[1] "Cum intimo cordis mœrore . . . indesinenter diu noctuque canentes et deprecantes . . . omnes abbates ejus de suis locis et anachoretæ concito cursu pergentes . . . secundum traditiones hominum de morte ejus hæsitantes. . . . Ne nos quasi orbatos sine abbatibus relinqueret . . . ut et omnem vitam nostram in diversis locis secundum suum desiderium sub præpositis a se electis constitueret."—EDDIUS, c. 58.

see of Peter from which I received justice and freedom, to end my life there. I shall take with me the chief of these four portions for an offering to the basilicas of Santa Maria Maggiore and St. Paul the Apostle. But if, as often happens to the old, I should die before accomplishing my wishes, I enjoin you, my faithful friends, to send these gifts to the churches I mention. Of the other three parts, you must divide one among the poor of my people for the salvation of my soul. Another shall be for the use of the two future abbots of Hexham and Ripon, and will enable them to conciliate the king and the bishops by gifts; and the last is for those who shared with me the long fatigues of exile, and to whom I cannot leave lands, that they may still have the means of living after my death." Here he stopped, overcome perhaps by emotion or fatigue; but after a while he resumed: "Remember that I appoint the priest Tatbert, my cousin, who up to this day has never left me, to be prior of the monastery of Ripon, to take my place while I live, and to succeed me when I die. I do all this that the Archangel Michael may find me ready when my hour arrives; and I do not think it is far off."[1]

When he had finished these arrangements, he caused the bell to be rung to summon his monastic family around him. When all the monks were assembled in the chapter-house, he entered, and sat down in the midst of them. "Your prior Celin," he said, "has for a long time laboured in all the duties of monastic life; I can no longer refuse him permission to return to the life of solitude and contemplation for which he thirsts. I exhort you to preserve scrupulously the regularity of your life until I return and bring you the person I judge worthy to be your superior. But if it please God that I do not return, take him who shall be pointed

[1] "Gazophylacium aperire clavicularío præcepit. . . . Alteram partem inter se dividant, ut cum muneribus regis et episcoporum amicitiam impetrare potuerint. Tertiam vero partem iis qui mecum longa exsilia perpessi laboraverunt. . . . Hæc statuta dico ut me Michael archangelus visitans paratum inveniat."—EDDIUS, c. 59.

out to you by these my fellow-travellers: make him your abbot, and pay him the obedience you have promised to God and to me." At these words, in which they foreboded a last farewell, all the monks fell on their knees weeping, and, bending their heads to the earth, promised to obey him. While they thus remained prostrate, Wilfrid blessed them, recommended them from the bottom of his tender heart to God, and departed, to see them no more.[1]

The new king of Mercia, Ceonred, nephew of his old friend Ethelred, had invited him to visit and confer with him at once as to the state of the Mercian monasteries and of his own soul; for, drawn by the example of his uncle towards monastic life, he wished to consult Wilfrid before joining that uncle in the cloister. The aged saint obeyed this call, and, crossing the Humber for the last time, entered Mercia, where he visited one after another all the monasteries he had founded or adopted in that great kingdom, making everywhere arrangements similar to those he had made at Ripon to further the well-being and security of his different communities.[2] He even went in this last effort of his old age to a district in which he had founded no monastic houses, into the country of the Wicciens, on the borders of the Welsh Celts and Western Saxons, to consecrate a Benedictine church just built at Evesham by the young king of the Mercians and Bishop Egwin.

[1] "Pulsato signo tota familia Hryporum simul in unum congregata est . . . geniculantes lacrymantesque, inclinato capite in terram . . . pronique orantes . . . et ab eo die ultra faciem ejus simul non viderunt."—EDDIUS, c. 50.

[2] "Abbates suos omnes in adventu suo gaudentes invenit . . . et unicuique eorum secundum suam mensuram, aut cum terris vitam monachorum suorum augmentavit, aut cum pecunia corda eorum lætificavit." —EDDIUS, c. 61. To the various monasteries, the foundation of which by Wilfrid we have described, and the names of which are known, such as Hexham, Ripon, Peterborough, Ely, and Selsey, we ought to add Stamford, in the part of Mercia conquered by the Northumbrians, which was given to him on his first return from Rome to England, by his friend the young King Alchfrid.

The name of Egwin is worthy of a moment's pause in our narrative. He was a scion of the reigning dynasty of Mercia, and had been, in his youth, made bishop of one of the new bishoprics created by Theodore, at Worcester; but the post was a difficult one, and, notwithstanding his unwearied self-devotion, he did not succeed in purifying or regulating the morals of his flock. They would neither obey nor even listen to him. One day when he had preached against the habitual vices of the population, in a great forge situated in the depths of a wood, the smiths, far from ceasing their work, struck as hard as possible with their hammers on the anvils, so as to deafen him and drive him away.[1] His zeal for the strict observance of the marriage vow among these new Christians had above all irritated them against him.

To put an end to the persecutions and calumnies with which he was loaded, he determined to go, following Wilfrid's example, to justify himself before the Holy See. Though he did not admit the truth of any of the accusations brought against him, he yet remembered with confusion certain sins of his youth, and to expiate them determined to undertake this long journey with his feet loaded with iron chains, and, thus voluntarily fettered, entered Rome,

[1] "Cum conflandi ferrum locus esset aptissimus, et fabris et ferri excussoribus maxime repleretur, gens incredula incudes malleis ferreis tanto strepitu continuo percutiebat, ut beati viri sermo non audiretur. . . . Præ concussione, immo confusione malleorum et incudum adhuc tinniebant ambæ aures ejus, ac si percutientes incudes eum sequerentur." —*Act. SS. O. S. B.*, t. iii. p. 322, and *Chronic. Abbatiæ de Evesham*, London, 1863, p. 26. The legend written in the eleventh century by a prior of Evesham adds that the forge and its inhabitants were swallowed up by an earthquake, and that since then no one has been able to exercise the trade of a smith on the site of the *castrum* thus punished, a story which suggests the following verse of Ovid—

"Pœna potest demi, culpa perennis erit;"

changing it thus :—

Culpa potest demi, pœna perennis erit.

Epist. ex Ponto, i. 64.

where Pope Constantine did him entire justice.[1] Two years after his first pilgrimage he went again to Rome, from whence he brought back the papal charter for the monasteries which a singular circumstance had determined him to build in a forest given him by King Ethelred. A swineherd, pushing his way through the tufted thickets of this wood, once came to a clearing where he saw three lovely girls seated, whose beauty appeared to him more brilliant than the sun; the one in the middle held a book, and all three were singing celestial harmonies. Modern learning has supposed the locality of this vision to have been a place consecrated by Saxon superstition to the worship of the three Goddess Mothers, a worship which had struck deep root among the rural population of all the northern provinces of the Roman Empire, and which resisted the anathemas of the Councils longer than most other vestiges of idolatry.[2]

Egwin, when he was informed by the herdsman, went to pray humbly on the place of the vision. When his prayer was ended, he in turn saw the three virgins, one of whom, taller and infinitely more beautiful than the others, held, besides her book, a cross, with which she blessed him before she disappeared.[3] He recognised the Mother of the Saviour,

[1] "Peccatorum juvenilium quondam conscium."—GUILL. MALMESB., *De Pontif. Angl.*, lib. iv. p. 284. "Pedes suos vinculis ferreis astrinxit quæ clave poterant firmari ac reserari."—*Chron. Evesh.*, p. 6. The legend adds that the key of these fetters, which he had dropped into the Avon, a river of his own country, was found at Rome, in a salmon which had come up the Tiber. This miracle greatly contributed to the popular renown of St. Egwin among the English of the middle ages, who, like their descendants, were great salmon-fishers.

[2] ROACH SMITH, *Illustrations of Roman London.* The same author relates that Wolstan, a monk of Winchester, at the end of the tenth century, in his poem on the Miracles of St. Swithin, has left a singular story of three nymphs or fairies who exercised their power in the forests of his neighbourhood.

[3] "Surgenti ab oratione tres virgines . . . apparuere, quarum quæ media eminebat præcelsior omnique nitore splendentior, aliis præfulgebat, liliis candentior, rosis vernantior, odore inæstimabili fragrantior. . . . Quum cogitaret hanc Domini Genitricem esse."—*Chron. Evesh.*, p. 9.

and immediately resolved to build a monastery in her honour in that hitherto inaccessible spot. The new king of the country, godson and pupil of Egwin, seconded his master in this design, and gave him eighty-four *manses* or pieces of ground in the neighbourhood of the forest.

On the very site of the great forge where the workmen had deafened Egwin with the noise of their hammers, and quite near the new monastery at Alcester, the Mercian parliament was convoked to give validity to the donations and privileges conferred on Egwin; and Wilfrid, as the great champion of the Benedictine rule in England, was appointed to preside at this solemnity, and to place on the altar he was about to consecrate the charter of endowment and freedom which had just been voted.[1] At the moment when he was about to accomplish, with his colleague Egwin, this solemn mission, in presence of all the people, he made the following prayer, which was immediately enrolled in the acts of the foundation:—

[1] "Ex mandato apostolico fuit sapientium conventus in loco qui Alneceastra vocatur . . . et Brythwaldus archiepiscopus ex ore omnium et terram loci et libertatem in carta descripsit. Tunc elegerunt sapientes ut dominus Wilfridus episcopus et ego privilegium idem ad locum eumdem afferemus. Eadem autem die . . . Wilfridus episcopus et ego . . . cartam et loci libertatem . . . super altare posuimus, et sic coram omnibus locuti fuimus."—*Chronicon Abbatiæ de Evesham*, edit. W. D. MACKAY, 1863, p. 20. Cf. Pref. p. xviii. in the new collection of *Rerum Britannicarum Medii Ævi Scriptores*. It is needless to say that I do not quote the authority of the Rule of Pope Constantine in favour of Evesham, so cruelly turned into ridicule, together with so many other pretended pontifical charters, by the formidable irony of Père Papebroch. (BOLLAND., vol. ii. April, pp. 30, 31.) We may remark that the chronicler of Evesham has not dared to cite this bull at its proper date, that of the foundation, and only transcribes it in speaking of the suit decided by Pope Innocent III., Dec. 24, 1205, between the Bishop of Worcester and the Abbot of Evesham; the Pope, deceived by false documents, of which many were then fabricated, pronounced for the monastery. The monk Thomas of Marleberge, charged to plead the cause at Rome, and who has left us a very honest and animated narrative of the whole procedure, tells us that he fainted at the feet of the Pope when he heard the sentence read, partly from fatigue on account of the fast of the vigil of Christmas, partly for joy to feel that they were delivered from a *quasi-Egyptian* servitude.

"Lord God, who dwellest in heaven, and who hast created all things, save him who shall give peace and security to this place, and shall confirm the inheritance of God in that liberty in which we offer it to Him. For this reason, in the name of Almighty God and of all heavenly virtue, we enjoin that neither king, nor prince, nor minister, nor any man of what rank soever, shall have the audacity to rob this holy place, or to appropriate any part of it whatever to his own profit; that this place may always remain as we will it, consecrated to the use of the flocks and shepherds of God, and under the sway of its own abbot, according to the rule of God and St. Benedict. But if—which God forbid!—any man, led astray by avarice, should contravene this institution, may he be judged before the tribunal of God, may he be forgotten by Christ, may his name be struck out of the book of life, and himself chained in the eternal pains of hell, unless at least in this life he does penance. As to him who shall respect and preserve this foundation, may God and all the saints have him in their holy keeping, and give joy to his soul in this life and happiness in the next."[1]

Egwin was buried in the monastery he had founded, the later annals of which are not without interest. Five hundred years afterwards it became one of the most venerated sanctuaries and most frequented places of pilgrimage in England, the bleeding remains of Simon de Montfort, the great Earl of Leicester, slain in the great battle fought under its walls, having been carried thither. This proud aristocrat retains a just eminence in history as having completed the estab-

[1] "Domine Deus . . . conserva illum qui locum istum pacificabit et conservabit et hanc Dei hereditatem et hanc libertatem confirmabit quam Deo obtulimus. Nos etiam præcipimus . . . ut neque rex, neque princeps, neque minister, nec ullius ordinis homo, id præsumat ut locum istum sanctum diminuat aut sibi in privatam potestatem aliquid vindicet, sed sit locus hic, ut nos optamus, gregibus et Dei pastoribus ejusdem loci in usum, et bene dispositus in potestate proprii abbatis secundum regulam Dei et beati Benedicti. Si autem aliquis (quod absit) avaritiæ spiritu arreptus vertere velit, judicetur ante tribunal Dei et nunquam in Christi veneat memoriam."—*Chron. Evesh.*

lishment of the most famous political assembly of modern times—the British House of Commons—by calling together the representatives of the cities and boroughs, and seating them beside the knights of the shires. Although a victorious enemy of the throne, and condemned by the Pope, he won to his side the popular and religious sentiment of the nation. During his life, and long after his death, he was the idol of the English people, who gave expression to their passionate attachment for the champion of their rights in a mode adapted to the spirit of the time, by going to pray at his tomb, attributing to him numerous miracles, and by comparing this new St. Simon to Simon Peter and Simon Maccabeus.[1]

The consecration of this church of Evesham, which was reserved for such memorable destinies, was the last episcopal function exercised by Wilfrid, the last act of that long life so entirely devoted to the extension of monastic life and the defence of the Roman Church. From the banks of the Avon he returned slowly to the neighbourhood of Ely and Peterborough, which had long been dear and familiar to him. During this last journey it occurred to him, as to the most illustrious monk of our own day shortly before his death, to tell the story of his life to a younger friend and faithful companion, who might be his witness to posterity. It was to his inseparable follower Tatbert, as he rode by his side, that Wilfrid thus gave, not a general confession, but a detailed narrative of his long life, with the certainty of having reached the eve of its last day.[2] Death, indeed, arrested him on his journey, at Oundle, in one of his monastic foundations near

[1] There are seven pages of these pretended miracles in the Chronicles of the Monks of Melrose.—Cf. LINGARD, *Hist. Eng.*, vol. ii. p. 166 of the Paris edition; and FREEMAN, *Gentleman's Magazine*, Sept. 1862. Evesham has preserved nothing of the splendour of its ancient abbey, except one beautiful tower of the fourteenth century.

[2] "Omnem vitæ sua conversationem memorialiter prius enarravit Tatberto, . . . quadam die equitantibus per viam, quasi præsciens obitum suum."

Northampton, which he had dedicated to St. Andrew the Apostle, patron of that church at Rome from whence the first English apostles had proceeded, and where he himself, the first of Anglo-Saxon pilgrims, had prayed on his first arrival.[1] His last illness was short, and his death gentle and without pain. He had only time to remind his companions of his former instructions, and to designate as his successor at Hexham that Acca who stood by him in his trial at Rome and during his mortal illness at Meaux.

When he had given them a last blessing, his head fell back upon the pillow, and rested there in calm repose, without a single groan or sigh. The whole weeping community chanted prayers around his bed. As they reached Psalm CIII. and the verse *Emitte spiritum tuum et creabuntur*, his breathing ceased, and he yielded up his soul to his Creator.[2] The aged soldier of God died more gently than an infant in the cradle. He was seventy-six years of age, forty-four of which he had been a bishop.

His funeral was celebrated with a mingled pomp and grief which can readily be imagined. Tatbert, his disciple, confidant, and successor, was also his chief mourner. Before the burial, and in obedience to the last affectionate injunction of the dying, he sent the shirt of the saint, still moist with his last sweat, to an abbess named Cyndreda, who had been converted by Wilfrid, who now governed one of the monasteries of his congregation,[3] and who had, doubtless, like the abbess

[1] See vol. iii. p. 380.

[2] "Cum quiete, non cum gemitu et murmure, caput ad cervical lectuli inclinavit et requievit."

[3] "Ad abbatissam sancti pontificis nostri, nomine Cynedryd."—EDDIUS, c. 62.

"Interulamque puer sancti sudore madentem
Corripuit, normatrici tulit atque beatæ
Quam sibi flamineo sociaverat apte verendo
Egregius heros, redimitim castificando."
FRIDEGODUS, *Carmen de Sancto Wilfrido*, c. 55.

The holy Bishop Cuthbert, who died in 687, also sent his last garment to an abbess who had touched him by her pious devotion.

of Coldingham and Whitby, distinguished herself by her fidelity to the exiled and persecuted pontiff. The body was carried to Ripon, and buried in the church which he had built and dedicated to St. Peter, the apostle whom, along with St. Andrew, he had most venerated.[1] Tatbert ordained that a special mass should be said for him; and that every year, on the day of his anniversary, the tithe of his flocks should be distributed to the poor, besides the daily alms which were given also by Tatbert's orders, for the soul of his dear master and for his own.[2]

As soon as he was dead, Wilfrid appeared to the eyes of all in his true light, as a great saint and a great man. The popular veneration, restrained or disturbed during his life by the struggles of race, party, and opinion in which he had been engaged, found expression beside his tomb. Miraculous cures on earth, luminous apparitions in the sky; a supernatural power which protected the cell where he died from profanation and from the ravages of fire,—such were the first wonders which awoke the enthusiastic confidence of the Anglo-Saxons in this saint of their own race,[3] a confidence which, having

[1] EDDIUS, c. 61 and 64.

[2] The beautiful epitaph which Bede has preserved to us, and of which he was probably the author, deserves to be quoted, at least in part:—

"Wilfridus hic magnus requiescit corpore præsul,
Hanc Domino qui aulam ductus pietatis amore
Fecit, et eximio sacravit nomine Petri,
Cui claves cœli Christus dedit arbiter orbis. . . .
Paschalis qui etiam sollemnia tempora cursus
Catholici ad justum correxit dogma canonis,
Quem statuere patres, dubioque errore remoto
Certa suæ genti ostendit moderamina ritus:
Inque locis istis monachorum examina creba
Colligit, ac monitis cavit quæ regula patrum
Sedulus instituit: multisque domique, forisque
Jactatus nimium per tempora longa periclis,
Quindecies ternos postquam egit episcopus annos
Transiit, et gaudens celestia regna petivit.
Dona, Jesu, ut grex pastoris calle sequatur."

[3] EDDIUS, c. 62, 63.

once taken root, went on increasing, and shone out with redoubled intensity four centuries later under the first Norman kings. It was not only the blind, the infirm, the dying, and the shipwrecked who found occasion to rejoice that they had invoked the powerful intercession of the sainted abbot of Hexham with God, but also many innocent victims of persecution, many outraged virgins, and whole populations desolated by the ravages of war or by the oppression of foreign conquerors.[1]

At Hexham, in honour of the sanctuary which he had created, and for so long a time inhabited, the right of sanctuary was allowed to extend to a great circle round the monastery, the great enclosure—a sanctuary not only for ordinary criminals, but, especially in time of war, for the neighbouring population, who took refuge there with their cattle, and whom the sword of the most cruel invaders dared not follow thither. The limits of this sanctuary were marked only by crosses erected at certain distances. The town which was soon after built close to the great monastery had no walls; the universal veneration for the memory of Wilfrid served it instead of ramparts. Nearly four centuries after his death, this veneration, and the confidence it inspired in the surrounding people, were expressed in a touching and truly poetic legend. King Malcolm of Scotland, in one of his numerous and cruel incursions into England, irritated by the murder of his messengers near Hexham, ordered the sack of the town and a general massacre of its inhabitants. The Galloway Picts, the most ferocious of all the Scots, were charged with the execution of this atrocious order, which was but too much in accordance

[1] See the curious narrative of Abbot Ælred of Rievaulx, entitled *De Sanctis Ecclesiæ Hagulstadensis et eorum Miraculis*, ap. MABILLON, *Acta SS. O. S. B.*, vol. iii. pp. 204, 220, and RAINE'S *Priory of Hexham*. We may remark especially the incident of the young man unjustly condemned, who, at the moment of his execution, turned to the church of the saint, crying, "Adjuva nunc, Wilfride, quia si modo nolueris, paulo post non poteris." On which there arrived in hot haste two *fidejussores*, who gave security for him *more patrio*, and saved him. This story is cited by Palgrave as a proof of the utility of invoking saints and miracles against the iniquity of the law.

with the spirit of the time. The tears and supplications of the intended victims had been as vain as the entreaties of the clergy to move the king from his purpose. On the eve of the day fixed for the massacre, the whole population, disarmed and desperate, fled to the church of Wilfrid, which resounded with their cries. At this crisis one of the principal priests of the town fell asleep from fatigue, and had a dream, in which he saw two bishops arriving on horseback from the south. These Christian Dioscuri[1] came at a gallop to announce to the unfortunate inhabitants of Hexham that they were saved. "I am Wilfrid," said one, "and this is Cuthbert, whom I brought with me as I passed by Durham. We are come to deliver you. I have heard the weeping and cries of those who pray in my church. Fear nothing. At the dawn of day I will spread my net over the whole course of the Tyne, and no one shall be able to cross it to hurt you." Accordingly, in the morning a thick fog covered the whole valley. The messengers of the king lost their way, and when the fog dispersed, the Tyne had risen so high that, there being no bridge, the Scots could not pass over. The husband of St. Margaret saw in this the finger of God, and gave up his cruel design, and the inhabitants of Hexham were more and more convinced that the arm of Wilfrid was ever ready to defend them.[2]

But it was specially at Ripon, where his relics reposed, that the universal faith manifested itself. Crowds came

[1] This recalls the apparition of Castor and Pollux at the battle of Lake Regillus.

[2] "Rex vocat Gallowenses homines cæteris crudeliores. . . . 'Mox ut dies illuxerit, transeuntes flumen, irruite in eos. Non parcat oculus vester non ordini, non sexui, not ætati.' . . . Clamor ingens, ploratus et ululatus. . . . Et ecce apparuerunt duo viri . . . sedentes in equis. . . . Wilfridus vocor, et ecce hic mecum est sanctus Cuthbertus, quem transiens per Dunelmum adduxi. . . . Ecce, albescente aurora, extendam rete meum."—ÆLRED RIEVALLENSIS, *De SS. Ecclesie Hagulstad.*, c. 2, ed. Surtees. Cf. Pref., p. lx. Wilfrid is said to have come from Ripon, where his tomb was, and to have gone towards the north, passing by Durham, which is south of Hexham.

thither from all quarters, as if they expected still to find in bodily presence the aged saint who had feared neither man nor obstacles, and whose protection they invoked and even exacted with blind trust and tender familiarity, against the iniquities of conquest, the abuse of power, and the unjust severity of the law.[1]

Fifty years after the deliverance of Hexham, the Scots, under their sainted King David, reappeared in Northumbria, and committed horrors rarely equalled even in the barbarous wars of the period.[2] The alarmed population took arms under the leadership of the Archbishop of York, and of those Anglo-Norman barons who were most celebrated for the munificence they displayed in the monastic restorations of the twelfth century—the Bruces, Mowbrays, Percies, and Estoutevilles. They marched against the cruel invaders, and met them at some distance to the north of Ripon. The English were drawn up round a cart similar to that famous *carroccio* which the Lombards of the same period led into battle against the Emperor Frederic Barbarossa: on this humble pedestal, above a pyx containing the host, they had planted the banner of Wilfrid—*Wilfridi Ripensis vexillum*—between those of St. Peter and St. John. This cart, which they called the Standard,[3] gave its name to the battle, in which the king of Scotland and his ferocious army were completely routed. After the victory, they brought back to Ripon in triumph the banner of the saint, who had thus protected and saved his former diocese. The

[1] "Ita ad eum in hac ecclesia quasi ad viventem confugerent, in omnibus necessitatibus quasi præsentem consulerent, in tribulationibus et angustiis ejus auxilium non tam peterent quam exigerent."

[2] See the contemporary historians quoted by Lingard, and, above all, the discourse of a bishop before the battle, omitted in the edition given by Twysden of the special account by Ælred, abbot of Rievaulx, *De Bello Standardi*, but restored, after the manuscripts, by Raine, in *Priory of Hexham*, vol. i. p. 89.

[3] "Dicitur a stando Standardum, quod stetit illic militiæ probitas vincere sive mori."

banner often reappeared at the head of battalions armed for the defence of the country.[1]

Of this enduring and touching popularity there now remains nothing but a shadow, a name, a meaningless word. In the modern town of Ripon, which has grown out of the great monastery founded by Wilfrid, the people have retained the habit of calling a certain Sunday in the year *Wilfrid's Sunday;*[2] but when they are asked why, it becomes plain that they know nothing either of the saint to whom they owe their municipal existence, nor of the Church whose apostle and champion he was.

Happily for us, his work and his glory are inscribed in ineffaceable characters in the history of that Church, as well as of his country. His work was as varied as it was successful and lasting. Let us first remark its importance in respect to the monastic order. No one has done more for the extension and consolidation of that order in England, in the first place, by the introduction of the Benedictine rule, then established only at Canterbury; and afterwards by charters and exemptions obtained from Rome, and from the Saxon kings and parliaments, in behalf of the great foundations of his time, such as Hexham and Peterborough; but, above all, by the strongly woven links of intimate and active association between the numerous monasteries who regarded him as their head—a connection which gave them mutual security against the violence and usurpation of the princes and powers around them.[3]

[1] RICARDI HAGULSTADENSIS, *De Gestis Regis Stephani et de Bello Standardi*, ed. Surtees, pp. 91, 93.

[2] FABER, p. 204. There are no remains of Wilfrid's church, unless it be the crypt of the present cathedral, which is attributed to that period. In the time of Leland, a little before the Reformation, there were only three crosses, *antiquissimi operis*, on the site of the ancient monastery. One of the three spires of the church, rebuilt in the fourteenth century, bore the name of St. Wilfrid. It was blown down by the wind in 1660.

[3] "In ipsis exiliis non otio deditus, sed cœnobiis et episcopatibus fundandis industrius. . . . Reliquit cœnobia quot nullus, quæ solus aggregaverat, multis dividens hæredibus."—WILL. MALMESB., f. 153.

In the year which followed his death, the first anniversary of his funeral brought together at Ripon all the abbots of the numberless monasteries which he had either founded, adopted, or received among his own communities. They came from the four corners of England, disturbed and anxious as to the situation in which the death of their venerable chief had placed them. "While he lived," they said, "we often had to suffer the violence of kings and nobles; but by his holiness, his wisdom, and the great number of his friends, he was always able to deliver us. We must now believe that he will be our protector in heaven, as are St. Peter and St. Andrew, whom he loved so much, and to whom he dedicated all his possessions, and all his followers." On the evening of this anniversary, after supper, during the twilight of the long summer day, all the abbots, followed by the whole community of Ripon, went out to sing complines in the open air. There they saw the whole heaven lighted up by a great rainbow, the pale radiance of which proceeded from the tomb of the saint, and wrapt the whole enclosure of the monastery in light. Eddi, the faithful biographer of Wilfrid, was there, and saw with wonder this luminous circle. "We all understood," he says, "that the intercession of the saint was to be, by the goodness of God, an impregnable rampart round the vine of the Lord and His family; and the event has proved it, for since that time we have lived in safety, under abbots freely chosen by ourselves, and when some have been threatened, others have come to their help, and that throughout all England, north as well as south of the Humber."[1]

Our musician thus indicates, as it seems, that Wilfrid had

[1] "Undique abbates ejus cum subjectis suis . . . ab oriente et occidente, ab aquilone et austro. . . . Quamdiu vixit optimum caput vitæ nostræ, frequenter a regibus et principibus tentationes sustinuimus, quibus . . . finem venerabilem semper imponere consuevit. . . . In crepusculo vespertino . . . candidum circulum totum cœnobium circumdans quasi per diem arcus cœli absque variis caloribus. . . . Nos vero adorantes laudavimus Dominum."—EDDIUS, c. 64.

succeeded in making, at least for a time, a first attempt at that association of different monasteries among themselves which many great monastic saints had dreamed of as the completion of the rule of St. Benedict, and which is realised on so vast a scale in the orders of Cluny and Cîteaux.

To the Church of England Wilfrid did the immense service of securing the permanence of the episcopate. Proceeding in opposition to him, and by uncanonical methods, to partition the primitive bishoprics, Archbishop Theodore, his rival and enemy, established a new diocesan division, better adapted to the wants of the country. In addition to this, the same pontiff appointed the election of bishops to be conducted by popular assemblies presided over by the primate, at which deputies from the vacant church might be heard, and where the nominations of the king were discussed and controlled by the bishops and nobles; so that it might be truly said that, in principle, the choice of the bishops, as well as of the abbots, depended on the clergy.[1] But the power of the episcopate became rapidly so great, and its dignity so much sought after, that the elections were soon interfered with in an injurious and oppressive manner by the throne. Wilfrid opposed a far more efficacious barrier to this lay influence by resisting to the utmost the claim made by the kings to nominate, depose, or remove bishops at their pleasure, and by consecrating the principle of permanence and immovability in the episcopate as much by the support of the Holy See as by the national synods. Thanks to him, until the Norman Conquest, four centuries later, no English king dared arbitrarily depose a bishop from his see.

To the whole Catholic Church he rendered the important service of fighting, overcoming, and destroying the exclusive

[1] "Electio olim præsulum et abbatum tempore Anglorum pene clericos et monachos erat."—GUILL. MALMESB., *De Gestis Pontif.*, c. 3, f. 157. Cf. LINGARD, *Antiquities*, pp. 91–96, 145.

spirit of Celtic Christianity. Without being in any way a revolt or protest against Catholic unity, without deserving at all that imputation of heresy or schism of which Wilfrid and his followers were too prodigal, this spirit might readily have degenerated into a sort of narrow and jealous provincialism. After having long repulsed the idea of communicating the benefits of the faith to the Anglo-Saxon conquerors of Britain, the Celtic Church reconsidered the matter, and the ice having been once broken by Roman missionaries, she took measures to supplant and eclipse them everywhere. But the Celtic apostles of England, no doubt without knowing it, by a series of pedantic details, isolated their new converts from the Church of Rome, the centre of Christian action, precisely at the moment when that Church, called by Providence to evangelise the immense family of Teutonic tribes beyond the Rhine and Danube, had the most imperative need of help from that Teutonic race whose mission St. Gregory the Great had prophetically pointed out, and whom God had made the most active, the hardiest, and the most persevering of all barbarous races. England was about to become a mere ecclesiastical branch of Ireland, and her character in that case would have become doubly insular, to the detriment of Catholic unity and the common interest of the Christian world. Wilfrid appeared: by a fifty years' struggle, and at the cost of his peace, his safety, and even his personal freedom, he first neutralised, and finally annihilated, the Celtic spirit, without at any time being guilty of persecution, coercion, or violence towards the vanquished. He did more than check the Celtic movement; he sent it back into chaos; he extirpated all the ritual and liturgic differences which served as a veil and pretext for the prejudices of race and opinion; he extirpated them not only in his immense diocese, the vast region of Northumbria,[1] but throughout

[1] A few faint vestiges of Celtic traditions and institutions are all that can be found in Northumbria at a later period. For instance, in 936, King

all England; and not in England only, but, by the contagion of his example and his influence, in Ireland, in Scotland, and finally in the very sanctuary of Celtic Christianity, at Iona.[1]

Last of all, by himself converting the last of the conquering tribes which still remained pagan, that of the South Saxons, Wilfrid gloriously ended the conversion of England, which had been begun nearly a century before by missionaries from Rome. He did yet more. By his own pilgrimage, the first of his race to knock at the door of the Vatican, and to pray at the tomb of the Apostles—by thus instituting pilgrimages and appeals to Rome—by obliging Saxon kings and bishops to acknowledge, in law and in fact, the intervention and supremacy of the papacy,—he brought England into the orbit of that great movement of European civilisation of which the Holy See became gradually the pivot and the centre. It was he who completed and crowned the work of Gregory and Augustin. He placed

Athelstane, as he marched against the Scots, solicited the prayers of the Culdees, *Colidei*, who served the Cathedral of Saint Peter: "Videns in dicta ecclesia viros sanctæ vitæ et conversationis honestæ dictos ad tunc *Colideos*, qui multos sustentabant pauperes, et modicum habebant unde viverent, concessit . . . ut melius possent sustinere pauperes confluentes, hospitalitatem tenere." This evidently refers to the Celtic *Celi-Dé;* and their existence at York in the tenth century must have dated back from the institutions of the Irish missionaries anterior to Wilfrid. It is apparent also, that according to the universal custom of Celtic as well as Benedictine monks, they combined the celebration of divine service with the care of the poor. Athelstane granted them, after his victory, "unam travam bladi de qualibet caruca arante in episcopatu York, quæ usque in præsentem diem dicitur Petercorn." These *travæ* had been given up to the king on the condition of his exterminating the wolves which destroyed "fere omnes villanorum bestias." The wolves killed, the rents remained available, and the king bestowed them on the *Colidei*. This gift, *largitione fidelium*, was confirmed by William the Conqueror and William Rufus, who transferred them and their rents to a hospital founded by the same *Colidei* at York under the name of St. Leonard.—DUGDALE, *Monasticon*, quoted by REEVES, *The Culdees of the British Isles*, pp. 59–144.

[1] It will be seen further on how Adhelm, Egbert, and Adamnan finished Wilfrid's work.

the seal on the conquest of England by popes and monks. England owed it to him that she was not only Christian, but Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman. No other Anglo-Saxon exercised a more decisive and more sovereign influence on the destinies of his race.

In modern England, all that Wilfrid did is destroyed, all that he loved has perished. He no longer lives except in history, where he has left, for every attentive observer, an ineffaceable trace. By placing him upon her altars, the Church teaches us that by his devotion to justice, truth, and the good of souls, he has gained an eminent position among the saints. But in a purely historical point of view, his character and his career offer a study equally curious and interesting. We find in him no analogy with the great monks of the primitive Church, the solitaries of the Thebaïd, nor even with the solemn and mystic ascetics of Celtic Christianity. Though he was not insensible to the consolations and aspirations of spiritual life, the predominating features in his character are not those of an exclusively spiritual being, of a man of prayer and solitude; they are rather those of the man of action and movement, the soldier of religious life.

In Wilfrid begins that great line of prelates, by turns apostolic and political, eloquent and warlike, brave champions of Roman unity and ecclesiastical independence, magnanimous representatives of the rights of conscience, the liberties of the soul, the spiritual powers of man and the laws of God; a line to which history presents no equal out of the Catholic Church of England; a lineage of saints, heroes, confessors, and martyrs, which produced St. Dunstan, St. Lanfranc, St. Anselm, St. Thomas à Becket, Stephen Langton, St. Edmund, the exile of Pontigny, and which ended in Reginald Pole. By a strange and touching coincidence, it is beside the tomb of this last Roman Catholic Archbishop of Canterbury, in the cathedral, sprinkled with the blood of St. Thomas the Martyr, that the relics of

Wilfrid now rest, having been transferred to the church of the primacy in 959, to save them from the sacrilegious rapacity of the Danes.[1]

In addition to all this, Wilfrid was the precursor of the great prelates, the great monks, the princely abbots of the middle ages, the heads and oracles of national councils, the ministers and lieutenants, and often the equals and rivals of kings. When duty called, no suffering alarmed, no privation deterred, and no danger stopped his course; four times in his life he made the journey to Rome, then ten times more laborious and a hundred times more dangerous than the voyage to Australia is now. But, left to himself, he loved pomp, luxury, magnificence, and power. He could be humble and mild when it was necessary; but it was more congenial to him to confront kings, princes, nobles, bishops, councils, and lay assemblies, in harsh and inflexible defence of his patrimony, his power, his authority, and his cause.

He was never without adversaries, and, as it has been justly remarked, he seems to have foreseen and practised that axiom of Rancé, which says, "A Christian should spend his money in buying enemies." But many of his enemies were saints; and of all the holy bishops and abbots of his time, so numerous in the Anglo-Saxon Church, not one was his ally, not one held out to him a friendly hand in his trials and combats. Many even showed a sort of inexplicable animosity against him. It must be concluded that he did not sufficiently consider the susceptibility of national sentiment, which was always so powerful among his countrymen, and which finally detached them from Catholicism. And in addition, while making the greatest possible allowance for provincial rancour and personal jealousy, it must be admitted that there was in him an unjust contempt for former generous services, a certain sickly irritability, a tiresome pertinacity in dispute, and a

[1] FABER, p. 202.

haughty and injurious violence of language;[1] but of language alone, for in his acts he was always tolerant and generous.

On the other hand, he had many friends. The monks who came spontaneously to range themselves under his crosier were counted by thousands; among them he found bold and faithful companions in all his travels, shipwrecks, dangers, and exiles: and these lifelong followers were the same who prayed by his bedside with so many tears that his life might be spared. He inspired the most illustrious and most holy women of his race, Queen Etheldreda, the Abbess Ebba, and Elfleda, his last protectress, with an affection which vanquished all obstacles. He exercised over them, and over the most delicate and generous souls of his time, as well as over the savage Frisians and the dauntless Lombards, an irresistible influence; and this power lasted all his life from the time when, arriving at the Northumbrian court in the light armour of a boy, he gained the heart of Queen Eanfleda, until the last crisis, when the heroic Bertfrid, saviour of the Bernician dynasty, declared himself in favour of the aged exile.

This influence is explained by the rare qualities which more than redeemed all his faults. His was, before all else, a great soul, manly and resolute, ardent and enthusiastic, full of unconquerable energy, able to wait or to act, but incapable of discouragement or fear, born to live upon those heights which attract at once the thunderbolt and the eyes of the crowd. His eloquence, superior to anything yet known in England, his keen and penetrating intelligence, his eager zeal for literary studies and public education, his knowledge and love of those wonders of architecture which dazzled the Christian nation, and to which his voice attracted such crowds; his constancy in trial, his ardent love of justice,—all contributed to make of him one of those personages who sway and move the spirits of their contempo-

[1] This is admitted by the most enthusiastic of his modern biographers, Father Faber, p. 203. Compare HOOK, p. 138.

raries, and who master the attention and imagination even of those whom they cannot convince.[1] Something generous, ardent, and magnanimous in his nature commended him always to the sympathy of lofty hearts; and when adverse fortune and triumphant violence and ingratitude came in, to put upon his life the seal of adversity nobly and piously borne, the rising tide of emotion and sympathy carried all before it, sweeping away all traces of those errors of conduct which might have seemed to us less attractive or comprehensible.

He was the first Anglo-Saxon who secured the attention of other nations, and the first of whom a special biography has been preserved. In each detail, as well as in the general impression made by this biography, he appears to us a type of the qualities and singularities of his nation; of their obstinacy, courage, laborious and untiring energy, their dogged love of work and of conflict, their resolution to strive till death for their patrimony, honour, and rights. *Dieu et mon droit!* This proud English motto is written on every page of the life of Wilfrid. In the service of a cause which now, by the misfortune of the ages and the blindness of men, has become the most unpopular of all causes in the eyes of the English nation, Wilfrid displayed all the virtues which are most characteristic of his countrymen, and most fitted to attract them. All the passions and all the noble instincts of his people palpitated in him. That mind must indeed be besotted by hatred, a thousand times blinder than ignorance itself, which does not recognise in him the eldest son of an invincible race, the first of the English nation.

[1] "Vir pro justitiæ merito multis jactatus periculis . . . egregie factus ad promerendam gratiam principum apud quos exularet, idemque pro rigore justitiæ compatriotis regibus odiosus."—WILL. MALMESB., f. 153. Eddi, who, like all the learned monks of his time, knew his Horace by heart, does not fail, like a parliamentary orator of the nineteenth century, to apply to his hero, in the preface to his biography, the well-known lines—

"Feriuntque summos
Fulgura montes."—*Odes*, ii. 2.

BOOK XIII

CONTEMPORARIES AND SUCCESSORS OF ST. WILFRID, 650–735

Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day.—1 THESSAL. v. 5.

For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.—2 TIM. i. 7.

CHAPTER I

ST. CUTHBERT.—637–687

Contrast between Wilfrid and the saints of the Northumbrian coast.—His glory eclipsed by that of Cuthbert.—Childhood of Cuthbert, a shepherd on the Scottish borders.—He becomes a novice at Melrose.—He evangelises the Scottish Marches. (Note upon the Monastery of Dull, cradle of the University of St. Andrews.)—His austerities: his baths: legend of the otters.—He goes from Melrose to Ripon, from which he is expelled by Wilfrid, along with all the Celtic monks.—He becomes prior at Lindisfarne, where he establishes the customs of Rome and the Benedictine rule.—His life at Lindisfarne in its cloistral and in its external aspect.—His extreme modesty.—He becomes a hermit in a cave of the Isle of Farne.—Popular traditions concerning this portion of his life.—The birds of St. Cuthbert, and the beads of his chaplet.—His charity towards the crowd of penitents who sought him there.—His hospitality.—His humility.—King Egfrid takes him from his rock to make him Bishop of Lindisfarne.—He continues both monk and missionary during his short episcopate.—His compassion for the sufferings of his penitents.—The mad countess.—The mother consoled.—His affection for his foster-mother, for Queen Etheldreda, and the great abbesses Ebba of Coldingham and Elfleda of Whitby. (Note upon the exclusion of women from his monastery.)—His last visit to the abbess Verca.—He returns to his rock to die.—The abbess's shroud.—Last exhortations of Cuthbert: his death.—His closest friend dies at the same hour on the same day.—Their annual interview upon the rock of Farne.—Great and lasting popularity of his memory.—Translation of his relics to Durham.—Magnificence and wealth of that cathedral, after Toledo the richest in the world.—Right of asylum.—Efficacy of his protection to the oppressed.—Alfred, Canute, and William the Conqueror.—The independence, almost sovereign, of Cuthbert's successors under the Anglo-Norman monarchy.—He is invoked by the English against the Scottish invasions.—Battle of Neville's Cross.—His banner appears for the last time in the insurrection of the North against Henry VIII.—It is profaned and burned with his body.—His popularity at sea.—The sailor-monks.—Cuthbert, while a child, saw them like sea-birds

on the waves.—His appearance to sailors in danger.—The hermit Ethelwold prays for the shipwrecked.—Grace Darling, the Christian heroine of these islands in the nineteenth century.

BESIDE the great figure of Wilfrid there appears in history an entire family of monastic saints, his contemporaries and countrymen, who should have found a place in the narrative we have just concluded, had it not been already too much prolonged. But although they were all inhabitants of Northumbria during the rule of Wilfrid, they form naturally into a group apart. This separation is due partly to the reserve, sometimes approaching enmity, which they manifested towards him, and still more to the essentially peaceful nature of their character and position. If in some cases they are found in contact with the struggles and agitations of their age and country, it is evidently against their inclinations. Their desire for peace, and ascetic and studious retirement, was as great as that of Wilfrid for the fatigues and hazards of the fight; and their history and aspect, retired as they were in their monasteries upon the coast of the Northumbrian kingdom, where the conflict between Wilfrid and the descendants of the Man of Fire was continually breaking out with fresh force, afford a pleasant and refreshing contrast to the stormy career of the great abbot.

In the first rank of these peaceful men stands the monk honoured by the Church under the name of St. Cuthbert,[1] and whose glory soon eclipsed that of St. Wilfrid, though the place he holds in history is of much inferior importance. Yes, great as was the influence of Wilfrid—a great bishop, a great abbot, the offspring of a noble race—his popularity was surpassed among his contemporaries as well as with Catholic posterity by that of a shepherd boy, who also be-

[1] His Life was first written by a monk of Lindisfarne during the reign of King Aldfrid—that is, before 705, less than twenty years after the death of the saint—and afterwards, both in verse and prose, by Bede, who had attained the age of fourteen when Cuthbert died, and who takes care to state, with his usual exactness, the names and profession of all who supplied him with materials.

came a bishop, and whose diocese was one of those produced by the division of that of Wilfrid. The Celts have claimed Cuthbert as belonging to them, at least by birth.[1] They make him out to have been the son of an Irish princess, reduced to slavery, like Bridget the holy patroness of Ireland, but who fell, more miserably, victim to the lust of her savage master. They have also given him a place among the disciples of their great sanctuary in Iona.[2] His Celtic origin would seem to be still more conclusively proved by his attitude towards Wilfrid than by the constant tradition of the Anglo-Saxon monks of Durham. But, to tell the truth, nothing is certainly known either of his place of birth or the rank of his family.

His first appearance in history is as a shepherd in Lauderdale, a valley watered by a river which flows into the Tweed near Melrose, upon the borders, as now defined, of England and Scotland. It was then a district annexed to the kingdom of Northumbria, which had just been delivered by the holy King Oswald from the yoke of the

[1] The Irish origin of Cuthbert is undoubtingly asserted by Reeves, in his *Notes on Wattenbach*, p. 5. Lanigan (vol. iii. p. 88) states that Usher, Ware, and Colgan entertained the same opinion. There exists a Life of Cuthbert, translated from Irish into Latin, which was partly published, first in the collection of Capgrave, and afterwards reprinted by the Surtees Society in 1838, from a MS. much more full, but dating only from the fourteenth century. In this Life his mother is said to have been a daughter of the king of Leinster, whom the king of Connaught outraged and kept as his slave, after having slain all her family. Her child, whom she sent into Britain, was named *Nullhoc*—that is so say, *wailing*—because of the tears of his outraged mother. (COLGAN, *Act. SS.*, ad 20 Mart.) Many other ancient authors, both Irish and English, pronounce him an Irishman. Bede makes no reference to his birthplace. The Bollandists, who reckon him among the Anglo-Saxons in the article devoted to him on the date of the 20th March, seem to count him as Irish in their Life of St. Wiro, on the 8th May. Mabillon supposes him to have been born where he kept his sheep, on the banks of the Leader, but without giving any proof. Lanigan evidently inclines to the same opinion.

[2] "Una cum matre puer ad insulam, quæ Hy dicitur, profectus est: ubi aliquandiu cum religiosis viris loci illius conversatus est."—*Libellus de Ortu S. Cuthberti*, ed. Surtees, p. 79.

Mercians and Britons. As he is soon afterwards to be seen travelling on horseback, lance in hand and accompanied by a squire, it is not to be supposed that he was of poor extraction. At the same time it was not the flocks of his father which he kept, as did David in the plains of Bethlehem; it is expressly noted that the flocks confided to his care belonged to a master, or to several masters. His family must have been in the rank of those clients or vassals to whom the great Saxon lords gave the care and superintendence of their flocks upon the vast extent of pastures which, under the name of *folc-land* or commons, was left to their use, and where the cowherds and shepherds lived day and night in the open air, as is still done by the shepherds of Hungary in the *pustas* on both sides of the Danube.[1]

Popular imagination in the north of England, of which Cuthbert was the hero before as well as after the Norman Conquest, had thus full scope in respect to the obscure childhood of its favourite saint, and delighted in weaving stories of his childish sports, representing him as walking on his hands, and turning somersaults with his little companions.[2] A more authentic testimony, that of his contemporary Bede, informs us that our shepherd boy had not his equal among the children of his age for activity, dexterity, and boldness in the race and fight. In all sports and athletic exercises he was the first to challenge his companions, with the certainty of being the victor. The description reads like that of a little Anglo-Saxon of our own day—a scholar of Eton or Harrow.[3] At the same

[1] "Ac statim commendans suis pecora quæ pascebat dominis."—BEDE, *De Vita et Miraculis S. Cuthberti*, c. 54. Cf. KEMBLE, *Saxons in England*.

[2] "Cum jocantibus satis jucundus apparuit. Quidam saltu, alii luctamine . . . nonnulli vertice capitis in terram depresso, pede utroque in sublime porrecto, se subrigere decertabant."—*Ibid.*, p. 80.

[3] "Omnes cœtaneos in agilitate et petulantia superans."—MONACH. LINDISFARN., ap. BOLLAND., t. iii. Martii, p. 118. "Agilis natura . . . acutus ingenio . . . fessis nonnunquam aliis, ille indefessus, si quis ultra

time a precocious piety showed itself in him, even amid this exuberance of youth. One night, as he said his prayers, while keeping the sheep of his masters, he saw the sky, which had been very dark, broken by a tract of light, upon which a crowd of angels descended from heaven, returning afterwards with a resplendent soul which they had gone to meet on earth.[1] Next morning he heard that Aïdan, the holy Bishop of Lindisfarne, the apostle of the district, had died during the night. This vision determined his monastic vocation.

Some time afterwards we find him at the gates of the monastery of Melrose, the great Celtic establishment for novices in Northumbria. He was then only fifteen, yet nevertheless he arrived, like Wilfrid at the court of Queen Eanfleda, on horseback, lance in hand, attended by a squire; for he had already begun his career in the battle-field, and learned in the face of the enemy the first lessons of abstinence, which he now meant to practise in the cloister.[2] He was received by two great doctors of the Celtic Church—the abbot Eata, one of the twelve Northumbrians first chosen by Aïdan, and the prior Boswell, who conceived a special affection for the new-comer, and undertook the charge of his monastic education. Five centuries later, the copy of the Gospels in which the master and pupil had read daily was still kissed with veneration in the cathedral of Durham.

The robust and energetic youth very soon showed the rarest aptitude for monastic life, not only for cenobitical

secum vellet certare, quasi victor lætabundus inquireret. Sive enim saltu, sive cursu, sive luctatu, sive quolibet alio membrorum sinuamine . . . ille omnes æquævos et nonnullos etiam majores a se gloriabatur esse superatos."—BEDE, *De Vita et Miraculis S. Cuthberti*, c. 1. Cf. c. 6.

[1] "Vidit subito fusum de cœlo lumen medias largæ noctis interrupisse tenebras. In quo cœlestium choros agminum terram petisse."—BEDE, c. 4.

[2] "In castris contra hostem cum exercitu sedens, ibique habens stipendia parva."—BOLLAND., p. 118. "Cum equo desilisset et hastam quam tenuerat manu ministro dedisset."—BEDE, c. 6.

exercises, but, above all, for the missionary work, which was the principal occupation of monks in that country and period. He was not content merely to surpass all the other monks in his devotion to the four principal occupations of monastic life—study, prayer, vigils, and manual labour[1]—but specially applied himself to the work of casting out from the hearts of the surrounding population the last vestiges of pagan superstition. Not a village was so distant, not a mountain-side so steep, not a cottage so poor, that it escaped his zeal. He sometimes passed weeks and even months out of his monastery, preaching to and confessing the rustic population of these mountains.[2]

The roads were very bad, or rather there were no roads; only now and then was it possible to travel on horseback; sometimes, when his course lay along the coast of the districts inhabited by the Picts, he would take the help of a boat.[3] But generally it was on foot that he had to penetrate into the glens and distant valleys, crossing the heaths and vast table-lands uncultivated and uninhabited, where a few shepherds' huts, like that in which he himself had passed his childhood, and which were in winter abandoned even by the rude inhabitants, were thinly scattered. But neither the intemperance of the seasons, nor hunger, nor thirst, arrested the young and valiant missionary in his apostolic travels, to seek the scattered

[1] "Legendi videlicet, orandi, vigilandi, atque operandi solertior."—BEDE, *Vita S. Cuthberti*, c. 6.

[2] "Solebat ea maxime loca peragrare, illis prædicare in viculis, qui in arduis asperisque montibus procul positi, aliis horrori erant ad visendum, et paupertate pariter ac rusticitate sua, doctorum prohibebant accessum. . . . In montanis plebem rusticam."—BEDE, *Vita S. Cuthberti*, c. 9.

[3] "Cum duobus fratribus pergens et navigans ad terram Pictorum, ubi Mudpieralegis (?) prospere pervenerunt."—BOLL., p. 119. "Ad terram Pictorum qui Nidwari vocantur."—BEDE, c. 11. The late Mr. Joseph Robertson, one of the greatest antiquarians in Scotland, who kindly exerted himself to enlighten me upon the principal difficulties of the history of Cuthbert, supposed this place to be Newburn, near Largo, in the county of Fife.

population, half Celts and half Anglo-Saxons, who, though already Christian in name and by baptism, retained an obstinate attachment to many of their ancient superstitions, and who were quickly led back by any great calamity, such as one of the great pestilences which were then so frequent, to use of magic, amulets, and other practices of idolatry.[1]

The details which have been preserved of the wonders which often accompanied his wanderings show that his labours extended over all the hilly district between the two seas—from the Solway to the Forth.[2] They explain to us how the monks administered the consolations and the teachings of religion, before the organisation of parishes, ordained by Archbishop Theodore, had been everywhere introduced or regulated. As soon as the arrival of one of these apostolic missionaries in a somewhat central locality was known, all the population of the neighbourhood hastened to hear him, endeavouring with fervour and simplicity to put in practice the instruction they received from him. Cuthbert especially was received among them with affectionate confidence: his eloquence was so persuasive that it brought the most rebellious to his feet to hear their sins revealed to them, and to accept the penance which he imposed upon them.[3]

[1] "Ecce, inquit, in itinere quo vadis, nullum viculum, nulla hominum habitacula reperies. . . . Tuguria pastorum quæ, æstate infirmiter posita, tunc jam deserta patebant. . . . Aliquoties equo sedere at sæpius pedes. . . . Ad erronea idololatriæ medicamina currebant . . . per incantationes vel alligaturas vetata quælibet dæmoniacæ artis arcana."—*Vita*, c. 5, 9. BOLLAND., p. 119, 120.

[2] It would even appear that the sphere of his operations extended much farther north, for the *Libellus de Ortu S. Cuthberti*, written in the Irish tongue, a Latin version of which has been published by the Surtees Society, mentions a stone cross raised by him when he left the monastery of Dull, in the district of Athole, close to Taymouth. This monastery, which is celebrated in the annals of the Celtic Church, was the cradle of the University of St. Andrews. In the eleventh century it had for Coarb or Combarba—that is, for lay and hereditary abbot—the ancestor of the royal house of the Stuarts.

[3] "Erat quippe moris eo tempore populis Anglorum, ut veniente in

Cuthbert prepared himself for preaching and the administration of the sacraments by extraordinary penances and austerities. Stone bathing-places, in which he passed the entire night in prayer, lying in the frozen water, according to a custom common among the Celtic saints, and which Wilfrid himself, as has been seen, had borrowed from them, are still shown in several different places.[1] When he was near the sea, he went to the shore, unknown to any one, at night, and, plunging into the waves up to his neck, sang his vigils there. As soon as he came out of the water he resumed his prayers on the sand of the beach. On one occasion, one of his disciples, who had followed him secretly in order to discover the aim of this nocturnal expedition, saw two otters come out of the water, which, while the saint prayed on his knees, licked his frozen feet and wiped them with their hair until life and warmth returned to the benumbed members.[2] By one of those strange caprices of human frivolity which disconcert the historian, this insignificant incident is the only recollection which now remains in the memory of the people. St. Cuthbert is known to the peasant of Northumberland and of the Scottish borders only by the legend of those compassionate otters, even as the name of Columba recalls to the mariners of the Hebrides only the history of the tired crane, which he sent back to Ireland, its native country.

He had been for some years at Melrose, when the abbot

villam clerico vel presbytero, cuncti ad ejus imperium verbum audituri confluebant. . . . Cudbercto tanta erat dicendi peritia, tantus amor persuadendi."—*Vita*, c. 9.

[1] "Vas quoddam balnearium de lapide integro sibi fabricavit . . . quod vas adhuc in montis vertice permanet."—*Libellus*, c. 25. See above, vol. iii. p. 336, the history of Drychthelme, the penitent of Melrose, and for Wilfrid, vol. iv. p. 8.

[2] "Homo Dei obstinata mente . . . in mediis fluctibus et mari aliquando usque ad ascellas tumultuante et fluctuante tinctus est. . . . Venere continuo de profundo maris quadrupedæ quæ vulgo lutræ vocantur. . . . Hæ . . . anhelitu suo pedes ejus fovere cœperunt . . . lambentes pedes, volutantes tergebant pellibus suis, et calefacientes odoribus suis."—BOLL., p. 119. BEDE, c. 40.

Eata took him along with him to join the community of Celtic monks established by King Alchfrid at Ripon. Cuthbert held the office of steward: and in this office showed the same zeal as in his missions. When travellers arrived through the snow, famished and nearly fainting with cold, he himself washed their feet and warmed them against his bosom,[1] then hastened to the oven to order bread to be made ready if there was not enough. It may be perhaps remembered that the sons of Melrose had to give place to Wilfrid, when he, at the commencement of his campaign in favour of the Roman ritual and paschal unity, attempted to compel the Celtic colony of Ripon to give up their national customs.[2] It was a great and sudden storm, said Bede, with the prudent reserve which he observes in all that relates to the struggles between Wilfrid and other saints. Cuthbert returned with his countrymen to Melrose, resumed his life of missionary preaching, and again met his friend and master, the prior Boswell, at whose death in the great pestilence of 664[3] Cuthbert was elected abbot in his place. He had been himself attacked by the disease; and all the monks prayed earnestly that his life might be preserved to them. When he knew that the community had spent the night in prayer for him, though he felt no better, he cried to himself, with a double impulse of his habitual energy, "What am I doing in bed? It is impossible that God should shut His ears to such men. Give me my staff and my shoes." And getting up, he immediately began to walk, leaning upon his staff. But this sudden cure left him subject to weakness which shortened his life.[4]

However, he had not long to remain at Melrose.[5] The

[1] See the Legend of the Angel.—*Vita S. Cuthberti*, c. 7.

[2] See vol. iii. p. 385, "Instante subito turbine, præfatus abbas cum Cuthberto et cæteris . . . domum repulsus est."—BEDE, c. 8.

[3] See vol. iii. p. 409.

[4] "Utquid jaceo? . . . Date baculum et caligas. Statimque exurgens, cœpit tentare incessum baculo innitens."—*Vita*, c. 8.

[5] It is difficult to reconcile the *per aliquot annos* of Bede (c. 9) with the

triumph of Wilfrid and the Roman ritual at the Conference of Whitby brought about a revolution in the monastic metropolis of Northumbria, and in the mother monastery of Melrose at Lindisfarne. Bishop Colman, as has been seen, had returned to Iona, carrying with him the bones of his predecessor, the first apostle of the country, and followed by all the monks who would not consent to sacrifice their Celtic traditions to Roman unity. It was of importance to preserve the holy island, the special sanctuary of the country, for the religious family of which its foundress had been a member. Abbot Eata of Melrose undertook this difficult mission. He became abbot of Lindisfarne, and was invested with that kind of episcopal supremacy which has been already described, and which on Wilfrid's first downfall was to change into a full episcopate. He took with him the young Cuthbert, who was not yet thirty, but whom, however, he held alone capable of filling the important office of prior in the great insular community.

The struggle into which Eata and Cuthbert, in their proper persons, had entered against Wilfrid on the subject of Roman rites—a struggle to which they had themselves been victims at Ripon—did not point them out as the best men to introduce the novelties so passionately defended and insisted upon by the new Bishop of Northumbria. Notwithstanding, everything goes to prove that the new abbot and prior of Lindisfarne adopted without reserve the decisions of the Assembly of Whitby, and took serious pains to introduce them into the great Celtic community. Cuthbert, in whom the physical energy of a robust organisation was united to an unconquerable gentleness, employed in this task

precise dates assigned by Simeon of Durham, or rather Turgott, the official historian of the diocese, who recognised Cuthbert as his patron—dates which are drawn from a comparison of the most ancient records. The Bollandists, agreeing with Simeon, fix in 664, the year of Boswell's death, and consequently the first year of Cuthbert's priorate, his translation to Lindisfarne. The chronology of his life is simple enough. He was born in 637, became a monk at Melrose in 651, prior at Lindisfarne in 664, an anchorite at Farne in 676, bishop in 684. He abdicated in 686, and died in 687.

all the resources of his mind and heart. All the rebels had not left with Bishop Colman; some monks still remained who held obstinately by their ancient customs. Cuthbert reasoned with them daily in the meetings of the chapter; his desire was to overcome their objections by patience and moderation alone: he bore their reproaches as long as that was possible; and when his endurance was at an end, raised the sitting without changing countenance or tone, and resumed next morning the course of the debate without ever permitting himself to be moved to anger, or allowing anything to disturb the inestimable gift of kindness and light-heartedness which he had received from God.[1]

It was not only the orthodox Eastern and other liturgical observances which he had to make acceptable to the monks of Lindisfarne. The difficulty of establishing in his monastery that regularity and uniformity which become monastic life was not less great. Was it the Benedictine rule in all its purity, such as Augustin had brought into Canterbury, and which Wilfrid at that very moment was labouring to communicate to Northumbria, which Cuthbert desired to introduce at Lindisfarne? The opinions of the most competent authorities are divided in respect to this.[2] Every-

[1] "Erant in monasterio fratres qui priscæ suæ consuetudini quam regulari mallent obtemperare custodiæ, quos . . . modesta patientiæ suæ virtute superabat et quotidiano exercitio . . . paulatim convertebat. . . . Sæpius in cœtu fratrum de regula disputans, cum acerrimis contradicentium fatigaretur injuriis . . . placido vultu atque animo egrediens. . . . Erat namque vir ad perferenda fortiter omnia quæ vel animo vel corpore adversa ingerebantur invictissimus, nec minus inter tristia quæ contigissent faciem prætendens hilarem."—*Vita*, c. 46. "Omni hora hilaris et lætus."—*Monach. Lindisf.*, p. 121.

[2] Mabillon maintains the affirmative in opposition to the Bollandists (pp. 96 and 115), which latter go so far as to believe that the troubles which ensued on Wilfrid's arrival at Lindisfarne to replace Cuthbert as bishop, and of which Bede (see above, page 68) speaks so mysteriously, were caused by his attempt to introduce the rule of St. Benedict in place of the observances followed and recommended by Cuthbert. The opinion of Mabillon is founded chiefly on these words of the Lindisfarne monk: "Nobis regularem vitam primum componens constituit, quam usque hodie

thing leads us to believe that the young and holy prior was desirous of adding to the rule of St. Benedict certain special customs justified by the habits and necessities of the Northumbrian climate and people. But his great desire was the strict observance of the rule when once established; and his historian boasts as one of his most remarkable victories the obligation he imposed for ever upon the monks of Lindisfarne of wearing a simple and uniform dress, in undyed wool, and thus giving up the passionate liking of the Anglo-Saxons for varied and brilliant colours.[1]

During the twelve years which he passed at Lindisfarne, the life of Cuthbert was identical with that which he had led at Melrose. Within doors, this life was spent in the severe practice of all the austerities of the cloister, in manual labour united to the punctual celebration of divine worship, and such fervour in prayer that he often slept only one night in the three or four, passing the others in prayer, and in singing the service alone while walking round the aisle to keep himself awake. Outside, the same zeal for preaching, the same solicitude for the salvation and well-being, temporal as well as spiritual, of the Northumbrian people, was apparent in him. He carried to them the word of life; he soothed their sufferings by curing miraculously a crowd of diseases which were beyond the power of the physicians—a class which does not seem to have been wanting among the

cum Regula Benedicti observamus." The Bollandists recognise the trace of a modern interpolation in the narrative of this monk, where he says that Cuthbert received on his entrance at Melrose "tonsuræ Petri formam, in modum coronæ spineæ caput Christi cingentis," whereas it is known that Melrose was the citadel of the Celtic tonsure. Let us acknowledge, in passing, that whatever was the rule established by Cuthbert, the saint, himself so austere, softened its regulations greatly for his monks, since we see that he recommended, and even enjoined them to eat a fat goose, upon which Mabillon adds, "Nec mirum si monachi illi anserina carne vescebantur, qui jam tum forsitan volatilia in piscium numero habebant." Finally, we observe that the use of wine was perfectly admitted among the companions of Cuthbert, and that they seem to have been connoisseurs in this matter.

[1] "Ut neque munditiis neque sordibus esset notabilis, ne quis varii aut pretiosi coloris habeat indumentum, sed ea maxime specie quam naturalis ovium lana ministrat."—*Vita*, c. 16.

Anglo-Saxons of this period, as they are mentioned almost at every page of their miraculous records. But the valiant missionary specially assailed the diseases of the soul, and made use of all the tenderness and all the ardour of his own spirit to reach them. When he celebrated mass before the assembled crowd, his visible emotion, his inspired looks, his trembling voice, all contributed to penetrate and overpower the multitude. The Anglo-Saxon Christians who came in crowds to open their hearts to him in the confessional, were still more profoundly impressed: though he was a bold and inflexible judge of impenitent vice, he felt and expressed the tenderest compassion for the contrite sinner. He was the first to weep over the sins which he pardoned in the name of God; and he himself fulfilled the penances which he imposed as the condition of absolution, thus gaining by his humility the hearts which he longed to convert and cure.[1]

But neither the life of a cenobite nor the labours of a missionary could satisfy the aspirations of his soul after perfection. When he was not quite forty, after holding his priorship at Lindisfarne for twelve years, he resolved to leave monastic life, and to live as a hermit in a sterile and desert island, visible from Lindisfarne, which lay in the centre of the archipelago, south of the holy isle, and almost opposite the fortified capital of the Northumbrian kings at Bamborough.[2] No one dared to live on this island, which was called Farne, in consequence of its being supposed the haunt of demons. Cuthbert took possession of it as a soldier of Christ, victorious over the tyranny of evil, and built there

[1] "Circuibat insulam, . . . pariter et longitudinem psalmodiæ ac vigiliarum incedendo alleviabat. . . . Circumquaque morantem vulgi multitudinem more suo crebra visitatione ad cœlestia quærenda et promerenda succendebat. . . . Spiritu mansuetudinis modestus ad ignoscendum pœnitentibus, ita ut nonnunquam confitentibus sibi peccata sua his qui deliquerant, prior ipse miserans infirmos, lacrymis funderet, et quid peccatori agendum esset, ipse justus suo præmonstraret exemplo."—*Vita*, c. 16.

[2] A minute description and plan of this island, now inhabited and crowned by two lighthouses, will be found in the *History of St. Cuthbert*, by Mgr. Eyre; London, 1858.

a palace worthy of himself, hollowing out of the living rock a cell from which he could see nothing but the sky, that he might not be disturbed in his contemplations. The hide of an ox suspended before the entrance of his cavern, and which he turned according to the direction of the wind, afforded him a poor defence against the intemperance of that wild climate. His holy historian tells us that he exercised sway over the elements and brute creation as a true monarch of the land which he had conquered for Christ, and with that sovereign empire over nature which sin alone has taken from us.[1] He lived on the produce of a little field of barley, sowed and cultivated by his own hands, but so small that the inhabitants of the coast reported among themselves that he was fed by angels with bread made in paradise.

The legends of Northumbria linger lovingly upon the solitary sojourn of their great national and popular saint in this basaltic isle. They attribute to him the extraordinary gentleness and familiarity of a particular species of aquatic birds which came when called, allowed themselves to be taken, stroked, and caressed, and whose down was of remarkable softness. In ancient times they swarmed about this rock, and they are still to be found there, though much diminished in number since curious visitors have come to steal their nests and shoot the birds. These seafowl are found nowhere else in the British Isles, and are called the *Birds of St. Cuthbert.*[2] It was he, according to the narrative of a monk of the thirteenth century, who inspired them with a hereditary trust in man, by taking them as the companions

[1] "Miles Christi, devicta tyrannorum acie, monarchus terræ, quam adierat, factus est. . . . Condidit civitatem suo aptam imperio . . . vivam cædendo rupem. . . . Qui enim Auctori omnium creaturarum fideliter et integro corde famulatur, non est mirandum si ejus imperiis ac votis omnis creatura deserviat. At nos plerumque idcirco subjectæ nobis creaturæ dominum perdimus, quia Domino et Creatori omnium ipsi servire negligimus."—*Vita*, c. 17, 21.

[2] Eider or Cuthbert-Ducks,—the *Oie à duvet* of Buffon, the *Anas mollissima* of Linnæus.

of his solitude, and guaranteeing to them that they should never be disturbed in their homes.[1]

It is he, too, according to the fishers of the surrounding islands, who makes certain little shells of the genus *Entrochus*, which are only to be found on this coast, and which have received the name of St. Cuthbert's Beads. They believe that he is still to be seen by night seated on a rock, and using another as an anvil for his work. This tradition, like many others, has been consecrated by Sir Walter Scott in the poetic picture which he has drawn of the Northumbrian coast, between the two great monasteries of Whitby and Lindisfarne.[2]

The pious anchorite, however, in condemning himself to the trials of solitude, had no intention of withdrawing from the cares of fraternal charity. He continued to receive frequent visits, in the first place from his neighbours and brethren at Lindisfarne, and in addition from all who came to consult him upon the state of their souls, as well as to seek consolation from him in adversity. The number of these pilgrims of sorrow was countless. They came not

[1] "Aves illæ B. Cuthberti specialiter nominantur. . . . Ipse, adhuc vivens, avibus illis firmam pacem et quietem in patribus suis dederat. . . . Quod patribus avium antiquitus dederat, hoc, de illarum genere pullis procreandis, et filiis hereditarie in pacis et misericordiæ custodia perpetuis temporibus conservando præstabat. . . . Dum solitarius in rupe secum commaneret, ita edomuit prædicta volatilia et natilitia. . . . Se palpantes capere, contrectare et tenere permittunt . . . in gremio tuo ludendo reticent . . . ad mensam tuam si incola fueris veniunt . . . ad manus etiam blandientis, alis palpitantibus, confugiunt."—REGINALD DUNELMENSIS, *De Admirandis Cuthberti Virtutibus*, c. 27. Cf. RAINE'S *St. Cuthbert;* Edinburgh, 1828, p. 22.

[2] "But fain Saint Hilda's nuns would learn,
If on a rock, by Lindisfarne,
Saint Cuthbert sits, and toils to frame
The seaborn beads that bear his name.
Such tales had Whitby's fishers told,
And said they might his shape behold,
And hear his anvil sound."
—SCOTT, *Marmion*, canto ii.

only from the neighbouring shores, but from the most distant provinces. Throughout all England the rumour spread that on a desert rock of the Northumbrian coast there lived a solitary who was the friend of God, and skilled in the healing of human suffering. In this expectation no one was deceived; no man carried back from the sea-beaten island the same burden of suffering, temptation, or remorse which he had taken there. Cuthbert had consolation for all troubles, light for all the sorrowful mysteries of life, counsel for all its perils, a helping hand to all the hopeless, a heart open to all who suffered. He could draw from terrestrial anguish a proof of the joys of heaven, deduce the certainty of these joys from the terrible evanescence of both good and evil in this world, and light up again in sick souls the fire of charity—the only defence, he said, against those ambushes of the old enemy which always take our hearts captive when they are emptied of divine and brotherly love.[1]

To make his solitude more accessible to these visitors, and above all to his brethren from Lindisfarne, he had built at some distance from the cave which was his dwelling-place, at a point where the boats could land their passengers, a kind of *parloir* and refectory for the use of his guests. There he himself met, conversed, and ate with them, especially when, as he has himself told, the monks came to celebrate with him such a great feast as Christmas. At such moments he went freely into all their conversations and discussions, interrupting himself from time to time to remind them of the necessity of watchfulness and prayer. The monks answered him, "Nothing is more true; but we have so many days of vigil, of fasts and prayers! Let us

[1] "Nec eos fefellit spes. Nullus ab eo sine gaudio consolationie abibat; nullum dolor animi quem illo attulerat redeuntem comitatus est. Noverat quippe mœstos pia exhortatione refovere: sciebat angustiatis gaudia vitæ cœlestis ad memoriam revocare . . . didicerat tentatis multifarias antiqui hostis pandere versutias, quibus facile carperetur animus, qui vel fraterno, vel divino amore nudatus exsisteret."—*Vita*, c. 22.

at least to-day rejoice in the Lord."[1] The Venerable Bede, who has preserved to us the precious memory of this exchange of brotherly familiarity, has not disdained to tell us also of the reproaches addressed by Cuthbert to his brothers for not eating a fat goose which he had hung on the partition-wall of his guests' refectory, in order that they might thoroughly fortify themselves before they embarked upon that stormy sea to return to their monastery.[2]

This tender charity and courteous activity were united in him to treasures of humility. He would not allow any one to suspect him of ranking the life of an anchorite above that of a member of a community. "It must not be supposed," he said, "because I prefer to live out of reach of every secular care, that my life is superior to that of others. The life of good cenobites, who obey their abbot in everything, and whose time is divided between prayer, work, and fasting, is much to be admired. I know many among them whose souls are more pure, and their graces more exalted than mine; especially, and in the first rank, my dear old Boswell, who received and trained me at Melrose in my youth."[3]

Thus passed, in that dear solitude, and among these friendly surroundings, eight pleasant years, the sweetest of his life, and precisely those during which all Northumberland was convulsed by the struggle between Wilfrid and

[1] "Quondam cum adhuc demorarer in mea insula solitarius. . . . Obseco, fratres, caute agamus et vigilanter. . . . Cumque post hoc aliquandiu epulis, exsultationi ac fabulis indulgeremus, rursus admonere cœpi ut solliciti exsisteremus in orationibus et vigiliis. . . . Et illi: Bene, inquiunt, et optime doces, sed tamen, quia abundant dies jejuniorum, orationis et vigiliarum, hodie gaudeamus in Domino . . . epulantibus nobis et diem lætum ducentibus."—*Vita*, c. 27.

[2] "Pendebat autem auca in pariete. . . . Citissime mittite eam in caldaria: coquite et comedite, et sic in nomen Domini ascendite navem ac domum redite."—*Vita*, c. 36.

[3] "Jure est cœnobitarum vita miranda . . . quorum plurimos novi parvitatem meam longe et munditia mentis et culmine gratiæ prophetalis anteire. E quibus . . . Boisilus qui me quondam senex adolescentem nutriebat."—*Vita*, c. 22.

the new king, Egfrid. All those important events, the expulsion of the great bishop from his see of York, his first appeal to Rome, his return with a verdict in his favour, his fruitless application to Egfrid, his imprisonment and exile, have left no trace upon the life which Cuthbert, tranquil and happy, lived on his island rock, until a day arrived when the reverberation of this blow struck him in his turn.

This was the day upon which the king of the Northumbrians, accompanied by his principal nobles and almost all the community of Lindisfarne, landed upon the rock of Farne, to beg, kneeling and with tears,[1] that he would accept the episcopal dignity to which he had just been promoted in the synod of Twyford, presided over by the Archbishop Theodore. He yielded only after a long resistance, himself weeping when he did so. It was, however, permitted to him to delay his consecration for six months, till Easter, which left him still a winter to pass in his dear solitude, before he went to York, where he was consecrated by the primate, Theodore, assisted by six bishops. He would not, however, accept the diocese of Hexham, to which he had been first appointed, but persuaded his friend Eata, the Bishop and Abbot of Lindisfarne, to give up to him the monastic bishopric where he had already lived so long, and to occupy in his place the diocese created to vex Wilfrid in his own monastery. There is, however, no evidence that he was influenced in this change by any reluctance to become an accomplice, even indirectly, in the spoliation of which Wilfrid had been the victim.[2]

[1] "Genuflectunt omnes, adjurant per Dominum, lacrymas fundunt, donec ipsum quoque lacrymis plenum dulcibus extrahunt latebris."—*Vita*, c. 24. Cf. *Hist. Eccl.*, iv. 28.

[2] See above, page 26. Let us repeat here that from the first deposition of Wilfrid in 678, his vast diocese, which comprehended all Northumberland, had been divided into two new dioceses, the boundaries of which seem to have been those of the two kingdoms of Deïra and Bernicia. The seat of the former remained at York, and that of the latter was established either at Hexham or Lindisfarne. The abbot of Lindisfarne and of Melrose, Eata, was placed in the Bernician bishopric. In 681, Archbishop

The diocese of Lindisfarne spread far to the west, much beyond Hexham. The Britons of Cumbria, who had come to be tributaries of the Northumbrian kings, were thus included in it. King Egfrid's deed of gift, in which he gives the district of Cartmell, *with all the Britons* who dwell in it, to Bishop Cuthbert, still exists.[1] The Roman city of Carlisle, transformed into an Anglo-Saxon fortress, was also under his sway, with all the surrounding monasteries. It has been already told how the inhabitants were exhibiting to him the fine ruins, the walls and fountains of their city, at the moment when the mysterious intimation of Egfrid's downfall was given to him.[2] It was at Carlisle that he offered the first consolation to Queen Ermenburga, whom that calamity made a widow; and it was there also he returned to give to the queen the veil of the brides of Christ.

The episcopate of Cuthbert attaches itself to general history only by means of this dramatic episode of Carlisle, and by his connection with the enemy of Wilfrid, from this moment struck in her turn, and converted by adversity. But the history of his life receives an additional lustre from the virtues and good works which distinguished the brief course of this apostolical mission. His new dignity made

Theodore, always occupied with the thought of diminishing the size of dioceses, separated Hexham from Lindisfarne, and, leaving Eata in his monastic cathedral, nominated to Hexham Trumbert, who had just been deposed by the synod of 684 *pro culpa cujusdam inobedientiæ*. When he gave up Lindisfarne to his former prior, Cuthbert, and went to Hexham, he took up again the government of a church which he had already occupied for three years. There was also the monastic bishopric of Abercorn, quite in the north, the bishop of which, Trumwine, accompanied Egfrid when he went to Cuthbert to pray him to accept the episcopate. Eata died in 686, and was replaced by St. John of Beverley.

[1] CAMDEN'S *Britannia*, iii. p. 131. Melrose was in the diocese of Lindisfarne; thus the population of Cuthbert's diocese was in a great part composed of vanquished races—Picts and Britons. This diocese was produced by the reaction of the foreign population whose lands had been absorbed in the kingdom of Bernicia.—VARIN, p. 33.

[2] See above, p. 59.

no difference in his character, nor even in his mode of life. He retained his old habits as a cenobite, and even as a hermit. In the midst of his episcopal pomp he remained always the monk and missionary of old. His whole episcopate, indeed, seems to bear the character of a mission indefinitely prolonged. He went over his vast diocese, to administer confirmation to converts, traversing a crowd more attentive and respectful than ever, lavishing upon it all kinds of benefits, alms, clothing, sermons, miraculous cures—penetrating as of old into hamlets and distant corners, climbing the hills and downs, sleeping under a tent, and sometimes indeed finding no other shelter than in the huts of branches brought from the nearest wood to the desert, in which he had made the torrent of his eloquence and charity to gush forth.[1]

Here also we find illustrations, as at all previous periods of his life, of the most delightful feature of his good and holy soul. In the obscure missionary of Melrose, in the already celebrated prior of Lindisfarne, and still more, if that is possible, in the powerful and venerated bishop, the same heart, overflowing with tenderness and compassion, is always to be found. The supernatural power given to him to cure the most cruel diseases was wonderful. But in his frequent and friendly intercourse with the great Anglo-Saxon earls, the *ealdormen*, as well as with the mixed populations of Britons, Picts, Scots, and English, whom he gathered under his crosier, the principal feature in the numerous and detailed narratives which remain to us, and which gives to them a beauty as of youth, always attractive, is his intense and active sympathy for those human sorrows

[1] "Implebat episcopi dignitatem, non tamen ut propositum monachi et anachoretæ virtutem desereret."—BOLLAND., p. 122. "Inter frequentiam turbarum monachicæ vitæ rigorem sollicitus observare . . . dum parochiam suam circumiens omnibus ruris casis et viculis monita salutis largiretur . . . devenit in montana et agresta loca, ubi multi erant de circumpositis villulus, quibus manus erat imponenda. . . . Tetenderunt ei tentoria, et cæsis de vicina silva ramusculis."—*Vita*, c. 26, 29, 32.

which in all ages are the same, always so keen, and capable of so little consolation. The more familiar the details of these meetings between the heart of a saint and true priest and the simple and impetuous hearts of the first English Christians, the more attractive do they become; and we cannot resist the inclination of presenting to our readers some incidents which show at once the liveliness of domestic affections among those newly-baptized barbarians, and their filial and familiar confidence in their pastor. One of the ealdormen of King Egfrid arrived one day in breathless haste at Lindisfarne, overwhelmed with grief, his wife, a woman as pious and generous as himself, having been seized with a fit of violent madness. But he was ashamed to disclose the nature of the attack; it seemed to him a sort of chastisement from heaven, disgracing a creature hitherto so chaste and honoured: all that he said was that she was approaching death; and he begged that a priest might be given him to carry to her the viaticum, and that when she died he might be permitted to bury her in the holy isle. Cuthbert heard his story, and said to him with much emotion, "This is my business; no one but myself can go with you." As they rode on their way together, the husband wept, and Cuthbert, looking at him, and seeing the cheeks of the rough warrior wet with tears, divined the whole; and during all the rest of the journey consoled and encouraged him, explaining to him that madness was not a punishment of crime, but a trial which God inflicted sometimes upon the innocent. "Besides," he added, "when we arrive we shall find her cured; she will come to meet us, and will help me to dismount from my horse, taking, according to her custom, the reins in her hand." And so the event proved; for, says the historian, the demon did not dare to await the coming of the Holy Ghost, of which the man of God was full. The noble lady, delivered from her bondage, rose as if from a profound sleep, and stood on the threshold to greet the holy friend of the house, seizing

the reins of his horse, and joyfully announcing her sudden cure.[1]

On another occasion, a certain Count Heunna, from whom he sought hospitality during one of his pastoral journeys, received him on his knees, thanking him for his visit, but at the same time telling that his wife was at the point of death, and he himself in despair. "However," said the count, "I firmly believe that were you to give her your blessing, she would be restored to health, or at least delivered by a speedy death from her long and cruel sufferings." The saint immediately sent one of his priests, without entering into the sick-room himself, to sprinkle her with water which he had blessed. The patient was at once relieved; and herself came to act as cupbearer to the prelate, offering him, in name of all her family, that cup of wine which, under the name of the *loving cup*, has continued since the time of the Anglo-Saxons to form a part of all solemn public banquets.[2]

A contagious disease at another time broke out in one part of his diocese, to which Cuthbert immediately betook himself. After having visited and consoled all the remaining inhabitants of one village, he turned to the priest who

[1] "Erat præfectus Egfridi regis Hildmer nomine . . . a B. Cuthberto specialiter dilectus, et . . . crebro ab eo visitatus. Cujus uxor . . . membra in diversa raptando, non minimum cunctis incutebat horrorem. . . . Adscendit vir equum et concitus venit. . . . Erubescebat eam confiteri insanam quam vir Domini sobriam semper videre consueverat . . . olim tam pudicam et castam. . . . Hoc est meum ministerium: non alium sed ipse tecum pergere debes. Cumque agerent iter, videns socium suum fientem . . . profluentibus in maxillas lacrymis . . . consolari eum mitissimis verbis cœpit. . . . Ipsa mihi occurrens in acceptione habenarum istius equi quas nunc teneo . . . ministrabit nobis."—*Vita*, c. 15. "Viro Dei gratulabunda occurrens, jumentum quo sedebat per frenum tenuit."—BOLLAND., p. 120.

[2] "Pervenit ad comitis vicum. Ille . . . rem ut erat miserabilis et lacrymabilis omni familiæ, hoc est, uxoris velut hurticæ, vitam desperabilem episcopo revelavit. . . . Jam surgens, sicut socrus Petri, sanata ministravit eis. Illa enim primum totius episcopo *poculum lætitiæ* dedit, qui sibi exspiranti calicem mortis auferebat."—BOLLAND., p. 122.

accompanied him, and asked, "Is there still any one sick in this poor place whom I can bless before I depart?" "Then," says the priest, who has preserved this story to us, "I showed him in the distance a poor woman bathed in tears, one of whose sons was already dead, and who held the other in her arms, just about to render his last breath. The bishop rushed to her, and taking the dying child from its mother's arms, kissed it first, then blessed it, and restored it to the mother, saying to her, as the Son of God said to the widow of Nain, 'Woman, weep not; have no more fear or sorrow; your son is saved, and no more victims to this pestilence shall perish here.'"[1]

No saint of his time or country had more frequent or affectionate intercourse than Cuthbert with the nuns, whose numbers and influence were daily increasing among the Anglo-Saxons, and especially in Northumberland. The greater part of them lived together in the great monasteries, such as Whitby and Coldingham; but some, especially those who were widows or of advanced age, lived in their own houses or with their relatives. Such was a woman devoted to the service of God, who had watched over Cuthbert's childhood (for he seems to have been early left an orphan) while he kept his sheep on the hills near Melrose, from the eighth year of his age until his entrance into the convent at the age of fifteen. He was tenderly grateful to her for her maternal care, and, when he became a missionary, took advantage of every occasion furnished to him by his apostolic journeys to visit her whom he called his mother, in the village where she lived. On one occasion, when he was with her, a fire broke out in the village, and the flames, increased by a violent wind, threatened all the

[1] "Presbyter Tidi . . . in quodam vico qui dicitur Medelpong. . . . Conversus ad me mitissime dixit: Est-ne aliquis in villa hac adhuc pestilentia languens? . . . Ego jam ostendens signavi ei mulierem . . . quæ lacrymis faciem rigantibus præteritam ac præsentem testabatur ærumnam. . . . O mulier, noli flere . . . ne metuas, nec mœsta sis."—BOLLAND., p. 124. *Vita*, c. 33.

neighbouring roofs. "Fear nothing, dear mother," the young missionary said to her; "this fire will do you no harm;" and he began to pray. Suddenly the wind changed; the village was saved, and with it the thatched roof which sheltered the old age of her who had protected his infancy.[1]

From the cottage of his foster-mother he went to the palaces of queens. The noble queen of Northumberland, Etheldreda, the saint and virgin, *regia virgo*, says the historian, before she left her throne and conjugal life to bury herself in the cloister, loved to surround herself with the religious of both sexes most renowned for their piety, and to converse familiarly with them for the good of her soul. She often called the young prior of Lindisfarne to her as well as Wilfrid, her guide and spiritual master, and this is the only occasion on which a meeting between these two contemporaries, so venerable yet so different, can be supposed to have taken place. The holy queen had a great friendship for Cuthbert. She overwhelmed him and his monastery with gifts from her own possessions, and wishing, besides, to offer him a personal token of her close affection, she embroidered for him, with her own hands (for she embroidered beautifully), a stole and maniple covered with gold and precious stones. She chose to give him such a present that he might wear this memorial of her only in the presence of God whom they both served, and accordingly would be obliged to keep her always in mind at the holy sacrifice.[2]

[1] "A quadam muliere, nomine Kenspid, adhuc vivens, sanctimonialis vidua. . . . Namque eam matrem appellavit, sæpe visitans eam. . . . Ventus abripiebat ignitos fœnei tecti fasciculos. . . . Præfata Dei famula concita accurrit. . . . Non timeas, inquit, mater; animi æquior esto: non enim tibi tuisve hæc quamlibet ferox flamma nocebit."—BOLLAND., p. 120. *Vita*, c. 14.

[2] "Regia virgo . . . sanctæ religionis ministros in fœdus amicitiæ viros ac mulieres sibi admittebat, quorum consilio atque consortio in omnem sanctimoniam provehi . . . arbitrabatur . . . præsertim . . . in familiaritatem colligendam fore ex cœtu monastico asserebat, inter quos . . . vitæ sanctitatis decore insignitum Cuthbertum . . . in gratiam

Cuthbert was on still more intimate terms with the holy princesses, who, placed at the head of great communities of nuns, and sometimes even of monks, exercised so powerful an influence upon the Anglo-Saxon race, and particularly on Northumbria. While he was still at Melrose the increasing fame of his sanctity and eloquence brought him often into the presence of the sister of King Oswy, who then reigned over the two Northumbrian kingdoms. This princess, Ebba,[1] was abbess of the double monastery of Coldingham, of which mention has already been made, the farthest north of all the religious establishments of Northumbria, and that in which Queen Etheldreda sought refuge first after leaving her husband. Cuthbert was the guest for several days of the royal abbess; but he did not intermit on this account his pious exercises, nor, above all, his austerities and long prayers by night on the sea-shore. During the day he preached to Ebba's two communities, edifying them by the wonderful harmony between his life and his doctrine.[2] Perhaps he was not himself equally edified by all he saw, if we give faith to the assertions of later historians, who trace back to that visit the severe regulations attributed to him in respect to the intercourse of monks with women of whatsoever condition.[3]

ac dilectionem exhibuit. . . . Opus eximium et præclarum . . . ex auro et lapidibus pretiosis, propriis ut fertur manibus docta auri texturæ ingenio . . . ob internæ dilectionis intuitum . . . festinavit. . . . Juste enim virgo virginem et dilecta dilectum tali decebat oppugnari obsequio. . . . Unde solum in conspectu regis Domini assistens uteretur."—THOMAS ELIENSIS, *Vita S. Etheldr.*, c. 9. This writer of the twelfth century affirms that the stole and maniple embroidered by Etheldreda for Cuthbert were venerated till his time at the Cathedral of Durham.

[1] "Sanctimonialis femina et mater ancillarum Christi nomine Ebba, regens monasterium . . . religione pariter ac nobilitate cunctis honorabilis."—*Vita*, c. 10.

[2] "Nec negare potuit quod ab eo charitas ex ancillæ Dei corde poposcit. . . . Dies aliquot ibi permanens, viam justitiæ quam predicabatur, omnibus actu pariter ac sermone pandebat."—*Vita*, c. 10.

[3] No trace of this prohibition is to found in Bede, or in the narrative of the monk of Lindisfarne. But an obstinate tradition, repeated by all

But the authority of this tradition, weakened as it is by the total silence of Cuthbert's biographers, is contradicted by his example. To the end of his life he maintained a very intimate and constant friendship with another abbess of the blood-royal of Northumbria, Elfleda, niece of St. Oswald and of King Oswy, who, though still quite young,[1] exercised an influence much greater than that of Ebba upon the men and the events of her time. It has been seen [2] that, out of consideration for her, the holy anchorite left his islet of Farne to hold a conference with her in another island nearer to Whitby, in respect to the anxieties by which she

more recent writers, declares that Cuthbert forbade the entrance of women into the church of the monastery at Lindisfarne. When his body was transferred, along with the episcopal see, at an after period to Durham, the same prohibition was maintained there. No woman could enter the great cathedral of that city. The history of this celebrated church is full of anecdotes relative to the attempts made by ladies of high rank to evade this humiliation. As time went on the severity relaxed, and there is still shown in the cathedral a line in blue marble which no woman could cross, but which permitted them at least to enter the nave, and see from a distance the choir and shrine of the saint. One of his historians adds: "Non tamen sexum illum detestando persequitur, sed occasionis delinquendi materiam amputando elidere conatur."—REGINALDUS DUNELMENSIS, *De Admirandis B. Cuthberti Vertutibus*, p. 151. The Irish version of his Life gives two reasons for this prohibition—the first, that the daughter of the Pictish king, "in domo patris adulterata a quovis juvene," had represented the young hermit as being the father of her child; and afterwards, that, when he was a bishop, and during a pontifical procession, he saw himself followed by a woman of dazzling beauty, who attracted the eyes and troubled the minds of all present. "Vidit plerosque hominium cachinno resultando ridere. . . . Circumspiciens videt quandam sub specie mulieris, et crine, et facie, cum nitente vestium varietate, miro modo fulgentem. Omnem humanum effigiem sui pulchritudine præcedebat. . . . Quicumque illius vultus inspexerant præ nimiæ cupidinis lascivia pene seipsos excesserant." It was a devilish apparition, which he put to flight by sprinkling it with holy water. From that time until the twelfth century women were forbidden to be interred in churches dedicated to him, *Libellus de Ortu*, c. 29. One of these churches gave its name to the town and county of Kirkcudbright (Cuthbrichtiskirche).—REGINALDUS, c. 84.

[1] She was born in 654, and was not thirty when Cuthbert met her in Coquet Isle. See the genealogical table A in Appendix.

[2] Page 65.

was assailed on account of her brother, King Egfrid. Cuthbert was heartily attached to all the royal family of Northumbria, the Bernician dynasty, which had been restored in his childhood under the great and saintly Oswald. He had a special devotion for that martyred king, whose head was represented on his seal. Oswald's niece, the Abbess Elfleda, before she became the generous and powerful protectress of Wilfrid, was thus the friend and client of St. Cuthbert, linking together these two illustrious personages as the holy Queen Etheldreda had done. She had the liveliest affection for the prior of Lindisfarne, and at the same time an absolute confidence in his sanctity. When she was assailed by an alarming illness, which fell into paralysis, and found no remedy from physicians, she cried, "Ah, had I but something which belonged to my dear Cuthbert, I am sure I should be cured." A short time after her friend sent her a linen girdle, which she hastened to put on, and in three days she was healed.[1]

Shortly before his death, and during his last pastoral visitation, Cuthbert went to see Elfleda in the neighbourhood of the great Monastery of Whitby, to consecrate a church which she had built there, and to converse with her for the last time. They dined together, and during the meal, seeing his knife drop from his trembling hand in the abstraction of supernatural thoughts, she had a last opportunity of admiring his prophetic intuition, and his constant care for the salvation of souls. The fatigue of the holy bishop, who said, laughingly, "I cannot eat all day long; you must give me a little rest"—the eagerness and pious curiosity of the young abbess, anxious to know and do everything, who rushes up breathless during the ceremony of the dedication to ask from the bishop a *memento* for a monk whose death

[1] "Sanctimonialis virgo et regalis. . . . Multo virum Dei semper excolebat amore. . . . Cum nil curationis adhibere medici. . . . Utinam haberem aliquid de rebus Cuthberti mei! Scio certe et credo et confido in Domino quia cito sanarer."—BOLLAND., 121. *Vita*, c. 23.

she had just heard of—all those details form a picture complete in its simplicity, upon which the charmed mind can repose amid the savage habits and wild vicissitudes of the struggle, then more violent than ever, between the Northumbrians and Picts, the Saxons and the Celts.[1]

But the last of all his visits was for another abbess, less illustrious and powerful than the two princesses of the blood of Ethelfrid, but also of high birth, and not less dear to his heart, if we may judge by the mark of affection which he gave her on his deathbed. This was Verca, abbess of one of that long line of monasteries which traced the shores of the Northern Sea, seated on the high promontories, or at the mouths of the Northumbrian rivers. Her convent was on the mouth of the Tyne, the river which divided the two Northumbrian kingdoms, Deïra and Bernicia, and to it the body of the holy King Oswin had been carried after his murder.[2] She gave Cuthbert a magnificent reception; but the bishop was ill, and after the mid-day meal which was usual in all the Benedictine monasteries, he became thirsty. Wine and beer were offered to him, yet he would take nothing but water; but this water, after it had touched his lips, seemed to the monks of Tynemouth, who drank the remainder, the best wine they had ever tasted. Cuthbert, who retained nothing of the robust health of his youth, already suffered from the first attacks of the disease which carried him off. His pious friend was no doubt struck by

[1] "Fidelissima abbatissa Elfleda de sancto episcopo aliud scientiæ spiritualis miraculum mihi revelavit. . . . Cum in parochia quæ dicitur Osingadum, simul in convivio sederent . . . præscius vicini sui obitus . . . rogatus a nobilissima et sanctissima virgine . . . venit ad possessionem monasterii ipsius, quatenus ibidem et ipsam videre atque alloqui, et ecclesiam dedicare deberet. . . . Manus ejus tremefacta, cultellus quem tenebat decidit in mensam. Jocose respondit: Num tota die manducare valebam? jam aliquando quiescere debui. Hæc audiens illa confestim misit ad majus suum monasterium. . . . Illa statim ad episcopum cucurrit . . . anhelans in basilicam pervenit."—MONACH. LINDISF., ap. BOLLAND., 123. BEDE, *Vita*, c. 34.

[2] See vol. iii. p. 310.

his feebleness, for she offered him, as the last pledge of spiritual union, a piece of very fine linen to be his shroud.[1]

Two short years of the episcopate had sufficed to consume his strength. After celebrating the feast of Christmas in 686 with the monks of Lindisfarne, the presentiment of approaching death determined him to abdicate, and to return to his isle of Farne, there to prepare for the last struggle. Here he lived but two months in the dear and pleasant solitude which was his supreme joy, tempering its sweetness by redoubled austerities. When his monks came to visit him in his isle, which storms often made inaccessible for weeks together, they found him thin, tremulous, and almost exhausted. One of them, who has given us a narrative of the end of his life, revived him a little by giving him warm wine to drink, then seating himself by the side of the worn-out bishop upon his bed of stone to sustain him, received from his beloved lips the last confidences and last exhortations of the venerated master. The visits of his monks were very

[1] "A religiosa et ad sæculum quoque nobilissima famula Christi Verca abbatissa magnifice susceptus, postquam de meridiana quiete surrexerunt. . . . Confitebantur alterutrum quod videretur sibi nunquam melius vinum bibisse, sicut unus ex ipsis postea in nostro monasterio . . . sua mihi relatione testatus est."—BEDE, *Vita*, c. 35. I do not know why the Bollandists, Mabillon, and M. Varin agree in placing the monastery of Verca, not at Tynemouth on the Northumbrian Tyne, which flows past Hexham and Newcastle, on the road from Whitby to Lindisfarne, but at Tyninghame, a little monastery founded by St. Baldred († 606), also on the seaside like Tynemouth, but more to the north, at the mouth of the Scotch Tyne, which traverses Lothian and flows through Haddington. The remains of this very ancient monastery are still to be seen in the Earl of Haddington's park. This district had been restored to the Pictish dominion after the defeat of Egfrid and the flight of the Bishop of Abercorn, with all the communities of the country. The last historian of our saint, Mgr. Eyre, having more complete information, and writing on the spot, proves that it was Tynemouth, where there were two monasteries, one of monks on the north, the other of nuns on the south of the stream. Mr. Joseph Robertson is of the same opinion; he attributes the error of Mabillon to the inexact information given him by a priest of the Scottish college at Paris, who, though a learned man, had the mania, so common among the Scotch, of claiming for his country both places and personages belonging to Ireland and England.

sweet to him, and he lavished upon them to the last moment proofs of his paternal tenderness and of his minute care for their spiritual and temporal well-being. His last illness was long and painful. He fixed beforehand the place of his burial, near the oratory which he had hollowed in the rock, and at the foot of a cross which he had himself planted. "I would fain repose," said he, "in this spot, where I have fought my little battle for the Lord, where I desire to finish my course, and from whence I hope that my merciful Judge will call me to the crown of righteousness. You will bury me, wrapped in the linen which I have kept for my shroud, out of love for the Abbess Verca, the friend of God, who gave it to me."[1]

He ended his holy life preaching peace, humility, and the love of that unity which he thought he had succeeded in establishing in the great Anglo-Celtic sanctuary, the new abbot of which, Herefrid, begged of him a last message as a legacy to his community. "Be unanimous in your councils," the dying bishop said to him, in his faint voice; "live in good accord with the other servants of Christ; despise none of the faithful who ask your hospitality; treat them with friendly familiarity, not esteeming yourself better than others who have the same faith and often the same life. But have no communion with those who withdraw from the unity of Catholic peace, either by the illegal celebration of Easter or

[1] "Ad dilectum eremiticæ conversationis agonem quantocius remeare curavit, quatenus indita sibi sollicitudinis mundanæ spineta liberior priscæ compunctionis flamma consumeret. . . . Qui cum duo menses in magna repetitæ suæ quietis exsultatione transigeret, multo consuetæ districtionis rigore corpus mentemque constringeret. . . . Vinum calefaciens attuli . . . videbam namque in facie ejus quia multum inedia simul et languore erat defessus. Completa curatione resedit quietus in stratu: resedi et ego juxta eum. . . . Hic ubi quantulumcumque pro Domino certamen certavi . . . unde ad coronam justitiæ sublevandam me a pio judice spero. . . . Nolui quidem ea vivens indui, sed pro amore dilectæ Deo feminæ, quæ hanc mihi misit, Vercæ abbatissæ, ad obvolvendum corpus meum reservare curavi."—*Vita*, c. 36, 37. This shroud, recognisable by its extreme fineness, was found when his tomb was opened in 1104, according to Reginald, *De Admirandis*, &c., c. 41.

by practical ill-doing. Remember always, if you must make a choice, that I infinitely prefer that you should leave this place, carrying my bones with you, rather than that you should remain here bent under the yoke of wicked heresy. Learn and observe with diligence the Catholic decrees of the fathers, and also the rules of monastic life which God has deigned to give you by my hands. I know that many have despised me in my life, but after my death you will see that my doctrine has not been despicable." These energetic words, and the allusion to his predecessor Colman, who had left Lindisfarne, carrying with him the bones of the holy Bishop 'Aidan, rather than submit to ritualistic unity with Rome, shows that this unity had in the Celt Cuthbert a champion less impetuous and less rash than Wilfrid, but not less resolute and devoted.[1]

This effort was the last. He lost the power of speech, received the last sacraments in silence, and died, raising his eyes and arms to heaven, at the hour when it was usual to sing matins, in the night of the 20th March 687. One of his attendants immediately mounted to the summit of the rock, where the lighthouse is now placed, and gave to the monks of Lindisfarne, by waving a lighted torch, the signal agreed upon to announce the death of the greatest saint who has given glory to that famous isle. He was but fifty, and had worn the monastic habit for thirty-five years.

Among many friends, he had one who was at once his oldest and most beloved—a priest called Herbert, who lived as an anchorite in an island of Lake Derwentwater, one of

[1] "Pondus ægritudinis facilitatem loquendi minoraverat. Verum me diligentius inquirente, quem hereditarium sermonem, quod ultimum vale fratribus, relinqueret, cœpit disserere pauca sed fortia. . . . Multo plus diligo ut eruentes de tumulo tollentesque vobiscum ossa mea recedatis ab his locis, et ubicumque Deus providerit incolæ maneatis, quam ut ulla ratione consentientes iniquitati schismaticorum jugo colla subdatis. . . . Scio enim quia etsi quibusdam contemptibilis vixi, post meum tamen obitum, qualis fuerim, quam mea doctrina non sit contemnenda videbitis."—*Vita*, c. 39.

those fine lakes which make the district of Cumberland and Westmoreland the most picturesque part of England. Every year Herbert came from his peaceful lake to visit his friend in the other island, beaten and undermined continually by the great waves of the Northern Sea; and upon that wild rock, to the accompaniment of winds and waves, they passed several days together in a tender solitude and intimacy, talking of the life to come. When Cuthbert, then a bishop, came for the last time to Carlisle, to give the veil to Queen Ermenburga, Herbert seized the opportunity, and hastened to refresh himself at that fountain of eternal benefits which flowed for him from the holy and tender heart of his friend. "My brother," the bishop said to him, "you must ask me now all that you want to know, for we shall never meet again in this world." At these words Herbert fell at his feet in tears. "I conjure you," he cried, "do not leave me on this earth behind you; remember my faithful friendship, and pray God that, after having served Him together in this world, we may pass into His glory together." Cuthbert threw himself on his knees at his friend's side, and after praying for some minutes, said to him, "Rise, my brother, and weep no more; God has granted to us that which we have both asked from Him." And in fact, though they never saw each other again here below, they died on the same day and at the same hour, the one in his isle bathed by the peaceable waters of a solitary lake, the other upon his granite rock fringed by the foam of the ocean; and their souls, says Bede, reunited by that blessed death, were carried together by the angels into the eternal kingdom.[1] This

[1] "In insula stagni illius pergrandis . . . jamdudum Cuthberchto spiritualis amicitiæ fœdere copulatus. . . . Dum sese alterutrum cœlestis sapientiæ poculis debriarent. . . . Memento, frater Hœreberte, ut modo quidquid habes me interroges. . . . Obsecro per Dominum ne me deseras, sed tui memor sis fidissimi sodalis. . . . Unius ejusdemque momento temporis egredientes e corpore spiritus eorum, mox beata invicem visione conjuncti sunt, atque angelico ministerio pariter ad regnum translati cœleste."—*Vita*, c. 28.

coincidence deeply touched the Christians of Northumbria, and was long engraven in their memory. Seven centuries later, in 1374, the Bishop of Carlisle appointed that a mass should be said, on the anniversary of the two saints, in the island where the Cumbrian anchorite died, and granted an indulgence of forty days to all who crossed the water to pray there in honour of the two friends.[1]

In all the histories of the saints, where shall we find a more complete contrast than that between Wilfrid and Cuthbert, though they were contemporaries, and devoted, from

[1] EYRE, p. 59. English readers will thank us for reminding them of the beautiful lines dedicated to our two saints by Wordsworth, a poet whose style of expression does not always equal the nobility and purity of his inspiration, but who deserves to be better known than he is in France:—

"If thou, in the dear love of some one friend,
Hast been so happy that thou know'st what thoughts
Will sometimes, in the happiness of love,
Make the heart sink, then wilt thou reverence
This quiet spot; and, stranger, not unmoved,
Wilt thou behold this shapeless heap of stones—
The desolate ruins of St. Herbert's cell
Here stood his threshold; here was spread the roof
That sheltered him, a self-secluded man,
After long exercises in social care
And offices humane, intent to adore
The Deity with undistracted mind,
And meditate on everlasting things
In utter solitude. But he had left
A fellow-labourer, whom the good man loved
As his own soul; and when, with eye upraised
To heaven, he knelt before the crucifix,
While o'er the lake the cataract of Lodore
Pealed to his orisons, and when he paced
Along the beach of this small isle, and thought
Of his companion, he would pray that both,
Now that their earthly duties were fulfilled,
Might die in the same moment. Nor in vain
So prayed he, as our chronicles report.
Though here the hermit numbered his last day,
Far from St. Cuthbert, his beloved friend,
These holy men both died in the same hour."

the bottom of their hearts, to the same cause? The life of Cuthbert, much shorter and less afflicted than that of Wilfrid, affords rest to the observer in the midst of the disturbances of a conflict to which, at the same time, he was not a stranger; but his part seems always to have been that of mediator and consoler. He liked better to persuade and to heal than to fight and vanquish. Beside Wilfrid, who is the saint of active life, of polemics, of publicity, of the struggle with kings, princes, and prelates, Cuthbert appears to us as the saint of nature, of a life retired and humble, of popular preaching, of solitude, and of prayer.

Notwithstanding this, the popularity of Cuthbert was immense, infinitely more general and more lasting than that of Wilfrid, or indeed of any other saint of his country and century. The Northumbrians listened with delight to the story of the pontiff who lived their own rustic and seafaring life, a shepherd and a sailor by turns—who understood and had shared their occupations, their feelings, their necessities—who had taught them goodness by practising it himself, and truth by serving it without remission, but with a boundless charity.

While these recollections were engraved in the faithful memory of the labouring classes, kings, lords, and prelates rivalled each other in demonstrations of respect and munificence to his relics and his spiritual posterity. All these different but equally persevering kinds of admiration produced an incredible amount of offerings, and especially gifts of land, made in his honour to the churches of Lindisfarne and Durham, in which successively he found a tomb. The words of Scripture were never more completely verified—"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."

It would require a volume to tell the history of the worship of St. Cuthbert and his relics, a history which, during many centuries, is mixed up with the history of the north of England, and sometimes takes the leading place

in it.[1] The history of the various journeys made by the monks of Lindisfarne, in the ninth and tenth centuries, to take back from the Danes the corpse of their beloved saint, along with the skull of the martyr-king Oswald, would make of itself an *Odyssey* full of varied and curious episodes. This treasure at last found an asylum upon a steep platform formed like a horseshoe, covered with wood, and surrounded on three sides by a rapid river, where was built, in 995, a chapel which took the name of Durham, and to which was afterwards transferred the episcopal and abbatial see. From this moment the name and memory of Cuthbert hovered over the magnificent Cathedral of Durham, one of the most beautiful in the world. This magnificent building, with its three storeys of arched windows, its two towers, its five naves and two transepts, forms, with the ancient castle of the bishop, built by William the Conqueror, a monument at once of religion and art as admirable as it is little known. It can be compared only to Pisa, to Toledo, to Nuremberg, or Marienburg. It has even a great advantage over all these celebrated places, in the beauty of the landscape which encloses it. It is the sole existing example of a splendid cathedral situated in the midst of an old wood, and on the height of a rock, the abrupt descent of which is bathed by a narrow and rapid river.[2]

[1] This volume actually exists; it has been compiled with great care and elegance by Mgr. Eyre, Catholic priest of Newcastle, under the title of *History of St. Cuthbert, with an Account of the Wanderings with his Body during 124 years, of the State of his Body until 1542, and of the various Monuments erected to his Memory* (London, 1862); and has very serviceable maps and plans. It contains the later history of Lindisfarne and of the Cathedral of Durham. Amongst other curious details we are told that a statue of the holy bishop, erected four centuries after his death, bore this inscription: "Sanctus Cuthbertus monachus, episcopus Lindisfarnensis, nunc patronus ecclesiæ ac libertatis Dunelmensis."

[2] I may draw attention to the view from the corner of Framwellgate Bridge as one of the most picturesque and curious in Europe. The visitor must follow the shady avenue of oaks and beeches which skirts the left side of the horseshoe formed by the Wear opposite to that on which the cathedral stands. Those who know the little town of Semur in Auxois,

The extreme veneration with which the Saxon people surrounded the relics of St. Cuthbert made this church the best endowed in England. The humble anchorite, who had lived on his rock by the modest produce of his manual labour alone, thus created the richest benefice, after Toledo, in Christendom.

Cuthbert had vainly asked his monks to bury him upon his rock of Farne, in order to spare them the trouble caused by the criminals who would come to take refuge at his tomb.[1] The monks of Lindisfarne exposed themselves willingly to these importunate visitors, rather than deprive their church of what was to be its most precious treasure. After his translation to Durham, universal consent conferred in an ever-increasing degree upon the sanctuary where his relics reposed a universally respected right of asylum. The ring of sculptured bronze attached to the door of the cathedral, which any pursued criminal or persecuted innocent had but to grasp in order to have part in the inviolability of the sanctuary, is still shown. The few who ventured to disregard this inviolability incurred celestial punishment, which increased the fame of the sanctuary. But the good saint did not wait until they had sought the shelter of his tomb to extend the hand of tutelary protection over the unhappy and the oppressed. The records of his church are rich in

with its castle and church built on a peninsula surrounded by the Armançon, may, by trebling the proportions of the landscape and its monuments, form an idea of the situation of Durham. Those who have visited Toledo, and recollect how the Tagus hollows out a bed for itself between two rocks and winds about the plateau on which is built the ancient capital of Spain, can still better imagine the site of Durham; but at Toledo the metropolitan church, buried among houses, does not equal the effect of the English cathedral; it lacks also the fine trees which surround the sanctuary of St. Cuthbert with so beautiful a girdle.

[1] "Vobis commodius esse arbitror ut hic requiescam propter incursionem profugorum vel noxiorum quos non libet: qui cum ad corpus meum forte confugerint, qui (qualiscumque sum) fama tamen exivit de me quia famulus Christi sum: necesse habetis sæpius pro talibus apud potentis sæculi intercedere idque ideo de præsentia corporis mei inultum tolerare laborem." —BEDE, *Vita*, c. 37.

narratives of his miraculous interposition in behalf of the unfortunate victims of feudal tyranny, or of the too often arbitrary and pitiless justice of the middle ages.[1] The poor who invoked him saw the saint penetrate into the hideous dungeons where they were buried alive. At his voice their chains fell off, their instruments of torture were broken, and, like the angel who delivered St. Peter, Cuthbert led them to a safe place through the midst of sleeping jailers and closed doors.

But in this posthumous history of the holy abbot of Lindisfarne nothing is more singular or more touching than to see a man so humble, so modest, and so pacific, transformed into the patron saint, historical, warlike, and political, of all Northumbria, and that for six centuries at least after his death. It became a matter of pride to Northumbrian patriotism to sustain and demonstrate that Cuthbert was the most powerful intercessor produced by the Anglo-Saxon race, and that neither the glorious Queen Etheldreda nor the holy King St. Edmond, martyred by the Danes, nor St. Thomas of Canterbury himself, were so much listened to by God.[2] The principal Anglo-Saxon kings emulated each other in seeking his protection. The great King Alfred, when hidden in the marsh of Glastonbury, at the most critical moment of his struggle with the Danes, saw St.

[1] See the curious anecdotes of the twelfth century, related by the monk Reginald in his *Libellus de Admirandis Beati Cuthberti Virtutibus quæ novellis patratæ sunt temporibus*, which was written after the year 1172, at the request of the holy abbot Ælred of Rievaulx, and published for the first time by the Surtees Society in 1835. This collection is one of the most curious memorials of the religious and social condition of England in the twelfth century. Among a crowd of legends more or less fabulous, it contains many details equally original and authentic of the manners and institutions of the time. Side by side with great examples of sanctity and of habitual study of the Holy Scriptures, we find, both in lay and in religious life, scandals and excesses of tyranny which nothing could now make supportable in Western Europe, and which could only be reproduced under the dominion of the Czars.

[2] "Gloriosæ reginæ Etheldrithæ . . . tribus præcipuis Anglorum sanctis." —REGINALD, c. 19, 115.

Cuthbert in a vision, who encouraged him, and promised him victory and the deliverance of his country. Canute, the great king of the Danes, when he became master of England, went barefooted to the tomb of Cuthbert, to pray there for the protection of the saint most venerated by the people he had just subdued. William the Conqueror himself, when he hastened to Durham to avenge the death of those Normans whom the inhabitants, intrenched in their sacred peninsula, had repulsed and slain, experienced a sort of supernatural impression before the tomb of the Anglo-Saxon saint, and respected the immunities on which the vassals of the bishopric plumed themselves in honour of their patron.[1]

In fact, the Norman Conquest did not in any way diminish the popularity of Cuthbert; Normans and Saxons were rivals for his protection. It is on record that an Anglo-Norman knight of the eleventh century returned from a pilgrimage to Rome, carrying the whole way, upon his bosom, a great piece of antique marble intended to decorate the altar of the holy bishop.[2]

Under the Anglo-Saxon monarchy Durham thus inherited at once all the veneration which attached to Lindisfarne—the cradle of faith and of the national Church in Northumbria—and to the personal memory of St. Cuthbert. Under the feudal royalty of the Plantagenets, the bishops who took special honour to themselves as his successors, succeeded in some degree in identifying themselves and their domains with him. Devotion to St. Cuthbert became so respected and so officially efficacious, that all that was given to them and all they acquired was legally invested with what was called, in the middle ages, *freedom*—that is to say, exemption from all taxes and all jurisdiction except that of the possessor. All the vast bishopric was considered the patrimony of St. Cuthbert, and bore his

[1] SIMEON DUNELMENSIS, c. 44.
[2] REGINALD, c. 74.

name. By reason of this privilege the bishops of Durham acquired by degrees all the attributes of royalty. They had a chancery, an admiralty, an exchequer, civil and criminal judges, the right of coining money, and in addition, the defence and suzerainty of the English frontier against the Scotch.[1] It was in consequence of having wasted the lands of St. Cuthbert that King David of Scotland drew upon himself the terrible defeat known as the Battle of the Standard;[2] and it was upon a fief of the saint's patrimony, though enclosed by the diocese of York, that this decisive victory of the Anglo-Norman barons was gained.[3]

Two centuries after that great day, Normans and Saxons, finally melted down into one nation, marched to battle against the Scots under the *vexillum Sancti Cuthberti*, which was no other than the corporal used by the prior of Lindisfarne to cover the chalice at mass, and which his pious admirers had taken the fancy of placing on the point of a lance, and carrying in place of a banner.[4] Edward III. was in France, where he had just won the battle of Crecy, and was besieging Calais. King David II. of Scotland, son of the illustrious Robert Bruce, had taken advantage

[1] CAMDEN'S *Britannia*, Gough's ed., vol. iii. p. 109.

[2] See above, p. 112.

[3] RICARD. HAGULSTAD., pp. 82, 88, 93, Surtees edition.

[4] REGINALD, *De Virtutibus*, c. 39. See also BOLLAND., p. 127, for another curious instance of the protection given by St. Cuthbert against the Scotch in 1297, from whence Camden derived his saying—"Anglorum reges et proceres credidisse S. Cuthbertum contra Scottos tutelarum divum fuisse." Walter Scott, always so skilful in invoking the poetical and religious traditions of the Scottish Marches, has not passed over this one:—

> "Who may his miracles declare?
> Even Scotland's dauntless king, and heir, . . .
> Before his standard fled.
> 'Twas he, to vindicate his reign,
> Edged Alfred's falchion on the Dane,
> And turned the Conqueror back again,
> When, with his Norman bowyer band,
> He came to waste Northumberland."
>
> —*Marmion*, canto ii. 15.

of his absence to make a new invasion of Northumberland. He came as far as the walls of Durham at the head of thirty thousand Scots, whose devastations recalled only too distinctly those of their ancestors the Picts. The Queen of England, the generous Philippa of Hainault, led in her own person, to meet the enemy, an army inferior in number, but inspired by the idea of punishing the sacrilegious cruelty of the invaders. The Scots had not even respected the possessions and vassals of the abbey, which was still called the patrimony of St. Cuthbert. At the moment when the fight was about to begin, the prior of the monastery planted the standard of the saint upon a height near the field of battle, around which all the monks assembled in prayer. Victory pronounced itself for the English: their formidable archers, drawn specially from among the vassals of St. Cuthbert, made short work with the Scottish men-at-arms. The Scottish army was annihilated, and King David wounded and made prisoner, along with his archbishop and the flower of his nobility. The next morning the victors, led by the chiefs of the two great chivalric houses of Norman Northumberland, the Nevilles and Percies, carried back to the monastic cathedral, along with the banners taken from the Scots, the precious relic they had borrowed. It reappeared in many battles, always assuring victory to the English, up to the reign of Henry VIII. The last time that this holy banner appeared on a field of battle was again in the hands of the Nevilles and Percies, in the glorious but ill-fated insurrection of the Northumbrians against the atrocious tyranny of Henry VIII. in 1536.[1] This insurrection, known under the name of

[1] RAINE'S *Priory of Hexham*, Appendix, p. 136, notes 141, 150. The instructions of Henry VIII. to the Duke of Norfolk, as to the punishment of rebels, may be read, p. 151. They direct that *a good number* of the inhabitants of every city, village, and hamlet shall be hanged and quartered, and, above all, as many priests and canons as possible are without ceremony *to be tyed uppe*. It reads like the instructions of the Committee of Public Safety to the Terrorist generals in La Vendée.

the *Pilgrimage of Grace*, in favour of the religion which the saints of Lindisfarne had brought into Northumbria, and which the miserable husband of Anne Boleyn wished to destroy, ended only in the massacre of the rural population, and in the judicial murder of the principal nobles and priests of the country—among others, of the last successor of St. Wilfrid at Hexham. Under the reign of this *Defender of the Faith* the standard of St. Cuthbert had the same fate as his body, which up to that time had remained uncorrupted. These holy remains, along with the bones of the Venerable Bede, were torn from the shrine in which they had been venerated by so many grateful generations; and the noble banner was also torn from the sanctuary and thrown into the fire by the wife of an apostate priest.[1]

[1] The shocking details of this profanation, with an extremely curious description of the ancient usages of the great cathedral of Durham before the Reformation, are to be found in a rare volume, entitled *The Ancient Rites and Monuments of the Monastical and Cathedral Church of Durham.* By J. D. (Davies), of Kidevelly; London, 1672, in 8vo.

James Raine, an Anglican writer whose erudition is clouded by his bigoted prejudices against the religion and the times which he has studied, affirms that at the opening of the tomb of St. Cuthbert in 1827 his body was discovered, together with his garments, comb, and other objects represented in the illustrations of a work entitled *St. Cuthbert, with an Account of the state in which his Remains were found upon the opening of his Tomb in Durham Cathedral in the year* 1827. By James Raine, rector of Meldon; Durham, 1828, in 8vo. The authenticity of this discovery is denied by Mgr. Eyre, according to whom the body of the saint is deposited in a hiding-place, the secret of which is known only to three English Benedictines!

The British Museum now contains the most ancient monument consecrated to the honour of the great Northumbrian saint—the Gospel called St. Cuthbert's. This celebrated MS. was the gift of Sir Robert Cotton, 1631. It was written between 700 and 720 by two bishops of Lindisfarne, Eadfreth and Ethelwold, and illuminated by the latter. The monk Betfreth enriched it with gilding and precious stones. It has a Northumbrian glossary of the end of the ninth century, interlined by a priest, Aldred—"bonæ mulieris filius eximius." The whole four, according to a final note, "Deo et Cuthberto construxerunt vel ornaverunt." It is a most curious monument of Irish art. According to Sir Frederick Madden, it bears all the marks of this special and extremely elegant art. It is discussed at length in an essay by Dr. Reeve, entitled *On Early Irish Calligraphy*, 1860, in 4to.

Less dazzling and less universal, but not less lasting, was the popularity of the holy Bishop of Lindisfarne with the seafaring population of the Northumbrian shores. This is apparent through all the different narratives which remain to us concerning the worship of which he was the object during so many centuries, and which throw a precious light upon the ideas, manners, and belief of the ancient English people. But let us state, in the first place, that all the monks of that district were, like Cuthbert, bold and unwearied sailors. There are no more interesting recollections of their life than those which show them to us in constant conflict with the element on which England has established her dominion. In that point, as in all else, the monks show themselves in history the pioneers of the Anglo-Saxon race. It is pleasant to see them sounding a prelude, as it were, by their courage and address, to the exploits of the most maritime nation in the world.

"Rule, Britannia! Britannia, rule the waves!"

The narratives of the seventh century are full of the cruel tempests which reigned upon the east coast of England, still one of the shores most abounding in shipwrecks.[1] But no danger stopped the sons of those bold sailors who owed the conquest of Great Britain to their experience of the sea. The Anglo-Saxon monks, under the frock and scapular, wore hearts which did not yield either in vigour or activity to any of their ancestors or countrymen. They coasted continually between the different monasteries and their depen-

[1] "En tellus nivibus, nebulis cœlum horrescit, aer flatibus adversis furit, fluctibus æquor . . . manente triduo tempestate prævalida. . . . Exorta subito tempestas fera, omnem eis naviganda facultatem abstulit . . . septem dies fervente unda conclusi, tristes in insula resederunt . . . quinque diebus obstitit tempestas ne redire possemus."—*Vita S. Cuthberti*, c. 11, 36, 37. "Ecce subito, positis in medio maris . . . tanta ingruit tempestatis hiems ut neque velo neque remigio quicquam proficere valeremus. . . . Cumque diu cum vento pelagoque frustra certantes tandem post terga respiceremus . . . invenimus nos undique versam par tempestate præclusos."—BEDE, *Hist. Eccles.*, v. i.

dencies, which extended along that coast bristling with rocks and reefs. Sometimes the furious waves drove them out to sea, out of sight of land, sometimes held them shut up in some desert isle or solitary bay for whole days and weeks. Then, as soon as the wind fell, they put out again to encounter new dangers in their miserable barks, rocked on the crest of the waves like sea-gulls. They were compared to sea-birds by those who from the shore saw them struggling against the storm; and it was under this aspect that they appeared for the first time to Cuthbert, when in his youth, before he became a monk, he witnessed, in the midst of a mocking and hostile crowd, the fruitless efforts of the monks of Tynemouth to effect a landing, against wind and tide, with the wood for building, which they were carrying to their monastery in five little boats.[1] The prayer of Cuthbert saved them, and brought them happily into port, where their brethren awaited them, all kneeling in a mass upon a point of rock which projected into the raging waves, to implore from heaven the safety of their companions.

When Cuthbert himself became a monk, his duties as missionary and prior, and afterward his prolonged sojourn upon the isle of Farne, familiarised him with all the dangers and habits of that seafaring existence which was so closely associated with monastic life. This recollection, joined to the popular glory of his name, gave him the place of patron saint to the poor seamen condemned to gain their bread by braving daily that stormy sea. Late in the twelfth century it was still told among them how, in the midst of the hurricane, the sailors in extremity saw the holy Bishop of Lindisfarne appear in the midst of them, with his mitre on his head and his crosier in his hand, which he used sometimes as a helm, sometimes as an oar, sometimes as a

[1] "Quod videntes e monasterio fratres, emissis in fluvium naviculis, eos qui in ratibus laborabant adjuvare nitebantur. . . . Sed vi fluminis et violentia ventorum superati, nequaquam valebunt. . . . Collecti in proximo obice flectebant genua . . . adeo ut quasi quinque aves parvulæ, quinque rates undis insidentes apparuerent."—*Vita S. Cuthberti*, c. 3.

grappling-iron, to save them from shipwreck, and bring them to a place of safety: no one dared to ask him his name, for all recognised, by the sheen of his beautiful and gentle countenance, the tender-hearted pontiff whom they had all been taught to venerate from their infancy as the protector of the country and of the coast.[1] It occurred to no one in those days to doubt the reality of such an apparition. For all the nations of Christendom at this period there was nothing more natural than the supernatural. It was only a more frequent and more direct intervention of the omnipotence of God, which appalled them or consoled them, but did not surprise.

In this dangerous archipelago, and on the precipitous island where Cuthbert had his favourite dwelling and where he died, he had more than one successor ambitious of following his holy footsteps in the same spot where he had best known and served his God. The first of these was a monk of Ripon called Ethelwold, who, more effectually moved by the example of Cuthbert than by the lessons of Wilfrid, lived for twelve years in the cell of his holy predecessor, the opening of which he attempted to close against the wind and rain by clay, hay, and finally by a hide, that he might not be troubled in his contemplations.[2] But when the moaning of the wind and the waves, which broke against the basaltic precipices of his isle, warned him of coming calamity, he issued from his shelter to hasten to the aid of the shipwrecked; and the sailors, driven in the midst of storm, saw him kneeling on the summit of his rock with his hands

[1] "Cuthbertus, quasi in specie corporali, omnibus visibilis et palpabilis apparuit, et in prora navis, gubernatoris de more, resedit. . . . Baculo pastorali de modo gubernaculi, pontem sævientem secando dividebat." —REGINALDUS, *De Virtutibus S. Cuthberti*, c. 23.

[2] "Sumto fœno, vel argilla, vel quicquid hujusmodi materiæ reperisset, stipaverat rimulas, ne quotidianis imbrium sive ventorum injuriis ab orandi retardaretur instantia. . . . Pelliculam vituli in angulo, quod et ipse et prædecessor Cuthbertus sæpius orans stare vel genuflectere solebat, clavis affixam violentiis procellarum opposuit."—*Vita S. Cuthberti*, c. 46.

raised to heaven imploring from God the salvation of his brethren.[1]

The Anglo-Saxon anchorite thus set up before God and man, on his unknown isle, and in the depths of an unknown age, a touching and glorious symbol of the everlasting part played by his fellow-monks, always ready to lavish upon Christians treasures of intercession, and to encounter public plagues and perils, as well as those temptations and tempests of the soul of which the waves in fury are but an imperfect image.

It is pleasant to connect with this old saint of the past a Christian heroine of our own days, the young and touching figure of Grace Darling, who came from the very isle of Cuthbert and Ethelwold to expose her life on behalf of the shipwrecked—as if that wild and threatening coast had been predestined by God up to our own time to be at once the locality and the witness of the noblest deeds of charity. Grace was the daughter of the keeper of one of those lighthouses which modern science has raised upon the group of isles between Lindisfarne and Bamborough. One night, in the midst of a terrible storm, she was awoke by the cries of the crew of a great ship which had gone ashore on a neighbouring reef. She awoke her father, and alone with him, oar in hand, in a frail boat, she rushed to the help of the perishing. The sea had never been more furious, nor the difficulty and danger of managing a boat greater. After desperate efforts, she at last reached the rock to which clung the last survivors of the crew. They were but nine in number, all of whom she took into her boat. The rage of the waves and violence of the wind were such that it took almost an entire day to row them back to the lighthouse, where she harboured and cared for them for three days and nights. All

[1] "Ubi longius visum levavimus, vidimus in ipsa insula Farne, egressum de latibulis suis amatissimum Deo patrem iter nostrum inspicere. Audito fragore procellarum ac ferventis Oceani, exierat videre quid nobis accideret, cumque nos in labore ac desperatione positos cerneret, flectebat genua."—BEDE, *Hist. Eccles.*, v. 1.

England burst into an unanimous transport of enthusiasm on learning this heroic act; and from the royal palace to the smallest village all echoed her praise. She was only twenty, and was no doubt already attacked by the pulmonary disease of which she died four years afterwards. She died without any desire to leave her father and her island, leaving only a name, worthy of eternal recollection, worthy to be inscribed among the heroes and saints. In Anglo-Saxon times she would have been canonised by the popular voice, as were all the saints whose history we record; and her place would have been fixed between Hilda and Ebba, the two great abbesses of her race and country, whose profaned altars and forgotten fame still hallow in the north and south the historic region which Grace Darling has lighted up with a modern and touching glory.[1]

[1] The ship wrecked upon the reefs of Longstone Island was a steamboat called the *Forfarshire*. Grace Darling's lighthouse is situated upon the isle called Longstone or Outer Farne. See the fine notice of this incident given by M. Alphonse Esquiros in one of his excellent articles upon England and English life (*Revue des Deux Mondes*, 1864), and for the localities Cruchley's excellent *Reduced Ordnance Map*, No. 62. Grace Darling's father died in May 1865. He is buried beside his daughter, who rests in the cemetery at Bamborough, upon the site of the ancient capital of those Northumbrian kings of whom we have spoken so much. The monument raised by a national subscription to this young heroine of Christian charity is visible at sea a great distance off.

CHAPTER II

ST. BENEDICT BISCOP, AND THE MONASTERIES OF WEARMOUTH AND YARROW

Benedict Biscop represents science and art, as Wilfrid represents public, and Cuthbert spiritual, life.—His birth and conversion.—His four first expeditions to Rome.—He gains the heart of King Egfrid.—Foundation of Wearmouth.—He brings masons and glassmakers from France.—His fifth and sixth visits to Rome, from which he brings back many relics, books, and pictures.—Important works of painting in the new monasteries.—A Roman abbot teaches liturgical music to all the Northumbrian monasteries, and assures himself of the orthodoxy of the English clergy in respect to the heresy of the Monothelites.—Foundation of Yarrow.—Fraternal union of the two monasteries in imitation of their patrons Saints Peter and Paul.—Benedict takes his nephew Easterwine as his coadjutor.—The occupations of a Saxon noble transformed into a monk.—Death of Easterwine.—Severe illness of Benedict.—His last injunctions.—His touching death by the side of his dying coadjutor.—After him Ceolfrid, the son of an ealdorman, disciple of Wilfrid and Botulph, governs the two monasteries.—History of Botulph, the founder of Boston and apostle of the Benedictine order.—Ceolfrid, as abbot, takes great pains to increase the libraries.—He makes an exchange of a book for an estate with the King of Northumbria.—His desire to die at Rome.—Grief of the six hundred monks who accompanied him to the spot where he embarked.—Their letter to the Pope.—He is able to go only as far as Langres, where he dies.—How Christianity taught the barbarous Saxons to love each other.

A THIRD saint, whose name has been already mentioned in this record, comes in between Wilfrid and Cuthbert, Benedict Biscop, the companion of Wilfrid in his first journey to Rome, and during the last half of his life the neighbour of Cuthbert, whom he followed closely to the tomb. In the retirement of the cloister, and, so to speak, in private life, Benedict held the position which Wilfrid held in public life, as the champion of Roman unity and propagation of the

Benedictine rule. He represents, besides, in the monastic constellation of the seventh century, intelligence, art, and science, as Cuthbert represents the gift of preaching and ascetic life. His fame was less than that of Wilfrid, and, with still greater reason, less than that of Cuthbert; but he has, notwithstanding, won a noble place in the annals of the Anglo-Saxon Church. We find various features in his life which do honour to his soul, and which are not without interest in the history of human intelligence.

Benedict was born, like Wilfrid, but several years before him, of the highest Anglo-Saxon nobility.[1] While he was still very young, he held an office in the household of King Oswy, who, according to the customs of the new-born feudalism, invested him with a fief taken from the national property, and proportioned to the importance of his office.[2] At twenty-five he gave up secular life, marriage, and his family, restored his lands to the king, and dedicated himself to the service of God. Before he settled in any community he went to Rome, where he had been long attracted by that desire of paying his vows at the tombs of the apostles which became so general among the Anglo-Saxons. It has been seen, in the history of Wilfrid,[3] how, after beginning their journey together, the two young Northumbrian nobles separated at Lyons, and how Benedict, after his first visit to Rome, returned there a second and third time, having in the meantime assumed the monastic habit in the island of Lerins, a monastery which had just entered into the family of St. Benedict. It may also be remembered that Pope Vitalianus, struck with the piety and knowledge of so con-

[1] Wilfrid's historian informs us that his true name was Baduging: we have no information why he took the name of Benedict, under which he is generally known, nor whence came his surname of Biscop, since he was never a bishop.

[2] "Nobili stirpe gentis Anglorum progenitus . . . cum esset minister Oswii regis, et possessionem terræ suo gradui competentem, illo donante, perciperet."—BEDE, *Vitæ Abbatum in Wiramutha et Girvum*, c. 1.

[3] See vol. iii. p. 379.

stant and zealous a pilgrim, assigned him as guide and interpreter to the Greek Theodore, who undertook, at the age of sixty-seven, to take the place of St. Augustin, and who retained his Anglo-Saxon guide with him for two years, transforming him from a monk of Lerins into the abbot of the principal monastery in Canterbury.[1]

After thus spending two years with the new archbishop, the abbot Benedict, instead of revisiting his native district, went for the fourth time to Rome. He was then in the prime of life; but when it is considered what were the difficulties and dangers of such a journey at such a time—when we remember that a journey from London to Rome was then twice as long as and a hundred times more dangerous than a journey from London to Australia is now—we are amazed at the resolution and energy which then, as ever since, has induced so many Christians, and especially so many Anglo-Saxon monks, not once only, but many times in their life, to cross the sea and the Alps on their way to Rome. His fourth expedition was undertaken in the interests of literature. He brought back from it a rich cargo of books, partly sold, partly given to him; and in passing by Vienna, the ancient capital of the Gauls, on his return, he brought with him many more, which he had deposited there in the charge of his friends.[2] When he returned at length to his native Northumbria he sought King Egfrid, the son of his former master, then the reigning monarch, and told him all he had done during the twenty years which had passed since he left his country and the royal service. Then, endeavouring to communicate to him the religious ardour with which his own heart was filled, he explained to the king all he had learned, at Rome and elsewhere, of ecclesiastical and monastic discipline, showing him the books

[1] St. Peter's, since called St. Augustin's.

[2] "Libros omnis divinæ eruditionis non paucos, vel placito pretio emptos, vel amicorum dono largitos retulit. . . . Emptitios ibi quos apud amicos commendaverat, recepit."—*Vitæ Abbat.*, c. 4.

and relics which he had brought back. Egfrid, who had not yet begun his unfortunate struggle with Wilfrid, allowed himself to be won by the stories of the pilgrim, for whom he conceived a great affection; and in order that he might apply his experience to the government of a new community, he detached from his own possessions, and presented to Benedict, an estate large enough to feed seventy families, and give occupation to seventy ploughs, according to the mode of calculating the value of land among the Anglo-Saxons.[1]

The estate was situated at the mouth of the Wear, a little stream which flows through Durham, and throws itself into the Northern Sea a little south of the Tyne. This gave the name of Wearmouth to the new monastery, which was consecrated to St. Peter, the prince of the Apostles, according to the express wish of Egfrid, in agreement with that of Benedict as an evidence of his leanings towards Rome.[2]

This foundation was no sooner assured than the unwearied Benedict took ship again, to seek in France *cæmen-*

[1] "Confestim ei terram LXX. familiarum de suo largitus."—*Vitæ Abbat.*, c. 4. Commentators suppose that Bede intended to indicate under the word *familia* the space of ground otherwise called a *hide* or *carrucata*—that is to say, the portion of land which could be cultivated by one plough in the space of a year.

[2] There are two distinct ecclesiastical sites at the mouth of the Wear—on the north, Monk-Wearmouth, where Benedict Biscop's monastery was situated; and Bishop-Wearmouth, on the south, which owes its origin to the bishops of Durham. Both are swallowed up in the town of Sunderland, situated on the east of Bishop-Wearmouth, on the sea, which is now one of the principal seaports in England.

Wearmouth has become at the present time one of the chief centres of the collieries, and also of those hideous evils which lately excited, thanks to the zeal of Lord Shaftesbury, the consternation and horror of England. See the Parliamentary discussions of 1842. There are no more *lazy monks* to feed the poor population; but there existed up to 1842 a crowd of women and girls, almost naked, who worked among the men, for fourteen hours successively, sixteen hundred feet below the surface of the earth, and at a temperature of about ninety degrees.—*Report from the Select Committee*, 1841, p. 4. Let us add with pleasure, that a humane legislation has since then applied remedies to the revolting abuses thus brought to a salutary publicity.

tarii, like those whom Wilfrid brought about the same time from Canterbury. As soon as they arrived he set them to work in building a stone church, in the Roman style, for everything that came from Rome was dear to him. It was in honour of St. Peter that he undertook this work, and it was carried on with so much energy that, a year after the first stone was laid, the church was roofed in and mass celebrated under one of those stone arches which excited the surprise and admiration of the English of the seventh century. He brought glassmakers also from France, for there were none in England; and these foreign workmen, after having put glass into the windows of the church and new monastery, taught their art to the Anglo-Saxons.[1] Animated by a zeal which nothing could discourage, and inspired by intelligent patriotism, and a sort of passion for beauty in art, which shrank neither from fatigue nor care,[2] he sent to seek beyond the seas all that he could not find in England—all that seemed necessary to him for the ornamentation of his church; and not finding even in France all he wanted, he went for the fifth time to Rome. Even this was not his last visit, for some years later he made a sixth pilgrimage.[3] On both occasions he brought treasures back with him, chiefly books in countless quantities and

[1] "Cæmentarios qui lapideam sibi ecclesiam juxta Romanorum quem semper amabat morem facerent, postulavit, accepit, attulit. . . . Misit legatarios Galliam, qui vitri factores, artifices videlicet Britanniis eatenus ignotos, ad cancellandas ecclesiæ, porticuumque et cænaculorum ejus fenestras adducerent. . . . Anglorum ex eo gentem hujusmodi artificium nosse ac discere fecerunt."—*Vitæ Abbat.*, c. 5. I believe that this, and the instance before quoted of Wilfrid, are the first known examples of the use of glass windows. There is, however, no evidence that these windows were coloured.

[2] "Quippe studio advehendi cognatis aliquod insolitum amor patriæ, et voluptas elegantiæ asperos fallebat labores."—WILL. MALMSEB., *De Gest. Reg.*, i. 54.

[3] In speaking of these two last journeys, Bede says *quarta* and *quinta vice*, because he counts only the departures from England—"*De Britannia* ad Romam accurrens." But he himself explains that during the second absence of Benedict Biscop, from 665 to 667, he made two pilgrimages to

of every kind. He was a passionate collector, as has been seen, from his youth. He desired each of his monasteries to possess a great library, which he considered indispensable to the instruction, discipline, and good organisation of the community; and reckoned upon the books as the best means of retaining his monks in their cloisters; for much as he loved travelling himself, he did not approve of other monks passing their time on the highways and byways, even under pretext of pilgrimages.[1]

Along with the books he brought relics, not alone for his own community, but for other churches in England, and a great number of pictures and coloured images. By introducing these images from Rome into Northumberland, Benedict Biscop has written one of the most curious, and, at the same time, forgotten pages in the history of art. It is apparent that Rome was then the grand reservoir not only of tradition, but also of graphic or symbolic representations for the instruction and edification of the faithful, the first

Rome—the one before, the other after his visit to Lerins. We add a chronological summary of the life of Benedict Biscop:—

628. Birth.
653. He gives up secular life, and goes to Rome for the first time.
665. His second journey to Rome: he becomes a monk at Lerins.
667. Third journey to Rome.
669. He returns with the Archbishop Theodore, and becomes abbot of St. Peter's, at Canterbury.
671. Fourth journey to Rome.
672. Return by Vienna, where he recovers his books.
674. Foundation of Wearmouth.
676. Journey to France in search of artists.
678. Fifth journey to Rome.
682. Foundation of Yarrow. He takes Easterwine as his coadjutor.
684. Sixth journey to Rome.
686. Death of Easterwine. Return of Benedict.
690. His death.

[1] "Innumerabilem librorum omnis generis copiam. . . . Bibliothecam quam de Roma nobilissimam et copiosissimam advexerat ad instructionem ecclesiæ necessariam. . . . Bibliothecam utriusque monasterii quam magna instantia cepit."—*Vitæ*, c. 6, 9, 14. Cf. *Homil. in Natale Benedicti Abbatis*, t. vii. col. 465, and LINGARD, *Antiquities*, t. ii. p. 129.

outlines of which, traced in the Catacombs by the tombs of the martyrs, began to reappear in the great mosaics which still decorate the apses of the primitive churches in Rome. The Venerable Bede, who speaks with enthusiasm of the expeditions of his master and friend, leads us to suppose that these were portable pictures, which could only have been painted on wood; but it may be supposed that the abbot of Wearmouth brought back with him both painters and mosaic-workers, to work on the spot at the decoration of his churches. How can it be otherwise explained how pictures on wood, brought even by water from Rome to England, should have been large enough to cover the walls and arches of the two or three churches of which Bede speaks?

However this may be, the result was that the most ignorant of the Christians of Northumbria found, on entering these new monastic churches, under a material form, the attractive image of the instructions which the monastic missionaries lavished on them. Learned and unlearned could contemplate and study with delight, here the sweet and attractive figure of the new-born Saviour, there the twelve Apostles surrounding the Blessed Virgin; upon the northern wall all the parables of the Gospels, upon the southern the visions of the Apocalypse; elsewhere a series of pictures which marked the harmony between the Old and New Testaments; Isaac carrying the wood for his sacrifice opposite to Jesus bearing His cross; the brazen serpent opposite Jesus crucified, and so on.[1] When we

[1] This passage, so important for decorative art, is as follows: "Picturas imaginum sanctarum quas ad ornandam ecclesiam quam construxerat, detulit; magnam videlicet B. M. V., &c., . . . quibus medium ejusdem ecclesiæ testudinem, ducto a pariete ad parietem tabulato præcingeret; imagines evangelicæ historiæ quibus australem ecclesiæ parietem decoraret; imagines . . . quibus septentrionalem æque parietem ornaret, quatenus intrantes ecclesiam omnes etiam literarum ignari, quaqua versum intenderent, vel semper amabilem Christi sanctorumque ejus . . . contemplarentur aspectum."—C. 6. Further on, when speaking of the fruits of his sixth and last journey to Rome: "Nam et tunc (attulit) dominicæ historiæ picturas quibus totam B. Dei Genitricis,

discover these details in the decoration of the Northumbrian monasteries twelve hundred years ago, we cannot but bethink ourselves that our own century, in two memorable instances, has reproduced this sublime thought: at Spires, in the vast cathedral which the munificence of the king of Bavaria has raised out of its ruins; and at Paris in the venerable Basilica of St. Germain des Prés, where our attention was attracted for the last time by the pencil of Flandrin, and from which a last lustre has been thrown upon talent so pure, so elevated, so serene, so naturally devoted to the service of the eternal truth. His name, though modern, like that of Ozanam, does not seem displaced amid the recollections of the saints and monuments of Christian antiquity!

After Latin and Greek books, after what was then called literature and philosophy, after architecture and art, it was the turn of music—of the art which above all others is liturgic and monastic. On his return from his fifth voyage, Benedict brought back with him from Rome an eminent monk called John, precentor of St. Peter's, and abbot of St. Martin's at Rome, to establish at Wearmouth the music and Roman ceremonies with entire exactitude, and according to the practice of the Basilica of St. Peter at Rome. As soon as he had arrived at Wearmouth, this learned abbot set out in writing the order of the celebration of feasts for all the year, of which he soon circulated numerous copies. Then he opened classes, at which he taught, *viva voce*, the liturgy and ecclesiastical chants. The best singers of the Northumbrian monasteries

quam in monasterio majore fecerat, ecclesiam in gyro coronaret: imagines quoque ad ornandum monasterium ecclesiamque B. Pauli Apostoli de concordia Veteris et Novi Testamenti summa ratione compositas exhibuit, &c." These last words apply to the second monastery founded at Yarrow, of which we have yet to speak. Thus it is apparent that the abbot Benedict Biscop had undertaken to decorate these churches—that of St. Peter at Wearmouth, St. Paul at Yarrow, and a third dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, *in majore monasterio*, which may have been only the choir or apsis of the first.

came to listen to him, and invited him to visit their communities.[1]

It was thus that Benedict Biscop drew from Rome, and spread throughout the soil of his country, by many different channels, the instructions and traditions of art consecrated by religion. History, it seems to us, offers few pages better adapted to refresh and console the soul than that on which the mother and sovereign Church is thus seen to open her protecting bosom to nations scarcely yet issued from the night of paganism, and to reveal to them, by the hands of her monastic ministers and missionaries, not only the mysteries of faith and the laws of morality, but also the pleasures of the mind and the beauties of art.

The passionate zeal of our abbot for the building and decoration of his monastic houses did not make him forget the more essential interests of his foundations. Before leaving Rome he took care to constitute his community upon the immovable basis of the rule of St. Benedict.[2] He obtained from Pope Agathon a charter which guaranteed the liberty and security of the new monastery of Wearmouth, as Wilfrid did for his favourite abbey of Hexham, and perhaps at an even earlier date. But far from requiring this guarantee against the king of Northumbria, as his old friend did, Bede takes care to prove that the pontifical grant was asked and obtained with the consent, and even at the desire, of Egfrid, and was confirmed in a public assembly by the king and bishops.[3] From the time of their first separation at Lyons, Benedict seems always to

[1] "Ritum canendi ac legendi viva voce præfati monasterii cantores edocendo. . . . De omnibus pene ejusdem provinciæ monasteriis ad audiendum eum, qui cantandi erant periti, confluebant."—*Hist. Eccles.*, iv. 18.

[2] "Post compositum juxta regulam monasterium, profectione completa."—C. 6.

[3] "Non vile munus attulit . . . epistolam privilegii . . . cum licentia, consensu, desiderio et hortatu Egfridi regis . . . qua monasterium ab omni prorsus extrinseca irruptione tutum perpetuo redderetur ac liberum . . . quod Britannias perlatum et coram synodo patefactum."—*Vitæ Abbat.*, c. 6, 12, and *Hist. Eccles.*, iv. 18.

have kept at a distance from Wilfrid, and no appearance of sympathy for the trials of the great persecuted bishop appears in him. Notwithstanding, they served the same cause, and inspired the Pope at least with equal confidence. Agathon gave a wonderful mark of this confidence to Benedict Biscop, by making his monastery the centre of the mission with which he had charged the precentor of St. Peter's, the object of which was to establish the orthodoxy of the English bishops and clergy in respect to the heresy of the Monothelites.[1]

King Egfrid, who was then at the height of his struggle with Wilfrid, seems to have been anxious to make up, to his own conscience and that of his Catholic people, for his violence towards the Bishop of York, by the intimacy of his relations with the two other great monks of his kingdom the anchorite Cuthbert and the abbot Benedict. In order to give the latter a new mark of sympathy and protection, he assigned to him another estate, not so great as that of Wearmouth, for it could support only forty families, but so near to the first that it seemed possible to unite the two gifts, and make of them one vast patrimony. This was the

[1] This mission seems to indicate on the part of the pontiff a certain distrust of Theodore. As has been already seen, Pope Vitalianus, in conferring on him the dignity of Metropolitan of England, joined to him the Abbot Adrian and Benedict Biscop himself, lest his nationality as a Greek might make him accessible to the errors of the Monothelites who then desolated the Church. At a later period, Agathon charged Abbot John, precentor of St. Peter's, to examine exactly into the faith of the Church of England, and to make his report at Rome. The pontifical envoy was present at the Council of Heathfield, called by the Archbishop Theodore (17th September 680), where the Church of England made her confession of orthodox faith, and declared her acceptance of the five general councils, and that of St. Martin. Abbot John carried with him a copy of the acts of this council, to submit it to the Pope, and on the other hand gave the acts of the council of the Pope St. Martin to St. Benedict Biscop's monastery to be copied. He died before he could return to Rome, and his body was carried to St.-Martin-de-Tours, which he had visited on his way to England, on account of his great devotion to that saint, of whom his monastery in Rome bore the name.

cradle of the monastery of Yarrow, the name of which is inseparably linked with that of the Venerable Bede. Yarrow was situated a little to the north of the monastery of Wearmouth, in a similar position, at the mouth of a river, the Tyne, which there falls into the Northern Sea, after following a course parallel to that of the Wear, and was dedicated to the Apostle St. Paul, as Wearmouth was to the Apostle St. Peter. The thought which inspired Biscop of establishing the spirit and image of Rome upon this Northumbrian shore, already sweet with the perfume of monastic flowers, is everywhere apparent.[1] He wanted a reproduction of St. Paul's outside the Walls, at a certain distance from his Saxon copy of St. Peter of the Vatican. Although he had appointed one of his most intimate friends and fellow-pilgrims, Ceolfrid, abbot of the new foundation, Benedict's intention was to make only one community of the two houses, in sign of the fraternal union which he longed to see reigning among them, and which should be suggested to them by the example of the two glorious apostles whom he had given to them as patrons.

In order to be more at liberty to devote his time to travel, as well as to be more at the disposal of the king, who continually sought his presence and counsels,[2] Benedict took a coadjutor in the government of his first monastery of Wearmouth. This new abbot was his nephew, and, like Ceolfrid, one of his most devoted companions.[3] His name was Easterwine. He was younger than Benedict by twenty-two years, and, like him, of high birth; for it was the

[1] "Plaga olim et suave halantibus monasteriorum floribus dulcis, et urbium a Romanis ædificatarum frequentia renidens."—GUILL. MALMESB., *De Gest. Reg.*, i. 9, 54.

[2] I borrow this detail from another Life of Benedict and Ceolfrid, which, if not written by Bede, has evidently furnished him with information, which he has repeated literally; it is to be found in the *Opera Minora*, and has been reprinted by Dr. Giles in the Appendix of his excellent edition of Bede, vol. vi. pp. 416-42.

[3] "Ut quem solus non poterat laborem, socia dilectissimi commilitonis virtute levius ferret."—*Vitæ Abbat.*, c. 6.

descendants of the noblest races of Northumbria who filled the monasteries, giving themselves up to occupations the most unlike those of their ancestors—to manual or literary work, to prayer and penitence. He had been, like Benedict, a soldier in the warlike household of King Egfrid. At twenty-one he had given up everything to enter into the community formed by his uncle at Wearmouth; nor did the one dream of asking, nor the other of offering, any exemption from the charges and observances of religious life, on account of relationship or nobility. The noble youth took pride only in following minutely the rule and occupations of the house, like any other monk. Thanks to his illustrious biographer, we know what the occupations of a Saxon thane turned monk were in the seventh century. His duties were—to thrash and winnow the corn, to milk the goats and cows, to take his turn in the kitchen, the bakehouse, and the garden, always humble and joyous in his obedience. When he became coadjutor, and was invested, in Benedict's absence, with all his authority, the young abbot continued the course of communal life; and when his duties as superior led him out of doors to where the monks laboured in the fields, he set to work along with them, taking the plough or the fan in his own hands, or forging iron upon the anvil. He was robust as well as young and handsome; but his look was infinitely gentle, and his conversation full of amiability.[1] When he was compelled to reprove a fault, it was done with such tender sadness that the culprit felt himself incapable of any new

[1] "Vir nobilis, sed insigne nobilitatis non ad jactantiæ materiem, ut quidam, despectumque aliorum, sed ad majorem, ut Dei servum decet, animi nobilitatem convertens. . . . Minister Egfridi regis . . . depositis armis . . . tantum mansit humilis, fratrumque simillimus aliorum, ut ventilare cum eis et triturare, oves vitulasque mulgere, in pistrino, in horto, in cunctis monasterii operibus jocundus et obediens gauderet exerceri. . . . Nequi vellet limpidissimam vultus ejus lucem nubilo sibi suæ inquietudinis abscondere. . . . Vel aratri gressum stiva regendo, vel ferrum malleo domando, vel ventilabrum manu concutiendo."—*Vitæ Abbatum.*, c. 7.

offence which should bring a cloud over the benign brightness of that beloved face. His table was served with the same provisions as that of the monks; and he slept in the general dormitory, which he left only five days before his death, being then hopelessly ill, to prepare himself, in a more solitary place, for the last struggle. When he felt his end approaching, he had still strength enough left to go down to the garden, and, seating himself there, called to him all his brethren, who wept the anticipated loss of such a father. Then, with the tenderness which was natural to him, he gave to each of them a last kiss.[1] The following night he died, aged thirty-six, while the monks were singing matins. Such happy deaths, which are common in the history of the time, seem to have been at once the privilege and the seal of all those generous vocations which filled the numerous monasteries of converted England.

When Benedict returned from his last expedition to Rome, he found his benefactor and protector, King Egfrid, and his nephew and coadjutor, Easterwine, both dead, along with a great number of his monks, carried off by one of the epidemics then so frequent. The only survivors at Yarrow were the abbot and one little scholar whom we shall find again further on, and whose fame was destined to eclipse that of all the Saxon saints and kings, who are scarcely known to posterity except by his pen.[2] Benedict did not lose courage, but promptly collected new subjects under his

[1] "Sub divo residens, accitis ad se fratribus cunctis, more naturæ misericordis osculum pacis eis flentibus et de abscessu tanti patris et pastoris mœrentibus dedit."

[2] This pupil is generally thought to be no other than the Venerable Bede, who relates the touching incident in the following words: "Omnes qui legere, vel prædicare, vel antiphonas ac responsaria dicere possunt ablati sunt, excepto ipso abbate et uno puerulo, qui ab ipso nutritus ac eruditus, nunc usque in eo monasterio presbyterii gradum tenens, jure actus ejus laudabiles cunctis scire volentibus et scripto commandat et fatis."—*Append.*, p. 421. He describes further on how the abbot and his pupil celebrated, alone and in great sadness, the whole psalms of the monastic service, *non parvo cum labore*, until new monks arrived.

sway, recommencing and pursuing, with his habitual energy, the decoration of his two churches of St. Peter and St. Paul.[1] The monks had already chosen as successor to Easterwine a deacon named Sigfried, a learned and virtuous man, but affected by pulmonary disease, and the first of the English, I think, in whom history indicates a malady so general and so fatal to their race.[2]

Benedict's own turn was, however, soon to come. God preserved his life to purify him, and put his patience to a long and cruel trial, before calling him to his eternal recompense. After having devoted the first thirteen years of his abbatiate to the laborious and wandering life that was so dear to him, and to those distant expeditions that produced so many fruits for his order and his country, he was stricken by a cruel disease which lasted for three years, and paralysed all his members one after the other. Though kept to his bed by this infirmity, and unable to follow his brethren to the choir, he notwithstanding continued to celebrate each service, both day and night, with certain of the monks, mingling his feeble voice with theirs. At night his sleepless hours were consoled by the reading of the Gospels, which was kept up without interruption by a succession of priests. Often, too, he collected the monks and novices round his couch, addressing to them urgent and solemn counsels, and among other things begging them to preserve the great library which he had brought from Rome, and not to allow it to be spoiled or dispersed; but above all to keep faithfully the rules which, after a careful study of the

[1] A fine engraving by Hollar, republished in Mrs. Jamieson's *Monastic Legends*, represents him standing, dressed in pontifical robes; in the background are the two beautiful monasteries of St. Peter and St. Paul, and the Tyne flowing between them—an arrangement not geographically exact, but which answers to the intention of reproducing on the Northumbrian coast the basilicas of St. Peter and St. Paul on the two opposite banks of the Tiber at Rome.

[2] "Nocivo et irremediabili pulmonum vitio laborantem."—*Vitæ Abbat.*, c. 8.

seventeen principal monasteries which he had visited during his numerous journeys beyond seas, he had given to them.[1] He also dwelt much upon the injunction he had already often repeated, that they should pay no regard to high birth in their choice of an abbot, but look simply to his life and doctrine. He prayed them to elect to this office the most worthy among themselves, in conformity to the rules of St. Benedict and the charter he had obtained for them. "If I had to choose between two evils, I should prefer," he said to them, "to see the spot on which I have established our dear monastery fall back into eternal solitude, rather than be succeeded here by my own brother, who, we all know, is not in the good way."[2] Thus Benedict shows himself to have been moved by a presentiment of one of the most cruel dangers and fatal weaknesses with which the future of the monastic order could be threatened.

The strength of the holy abbot, and, at the same time, that of his poor coadjutor, was by this time so exhausted by their respective diseases, that they both perceived they were about to die, and desired to see each other for the last time before departing from this world. In order that the wish

[1] "Evangelium tota nocte pro doloris levamine, quod et aliis noctibus fieri consueverat. . . . Ex decem quippe et septem monasteriis quæ inter longos meæ crebræ peregrinationis discursus optima comperi, hæc universa didici, et vobis salubriter observanda contradidi."—BEDE, *Vitæ Abbat.*, c. 8. Lingard (i. 208) believes from this passage that the rule of St. Benedict was only partially followed at Wearmouth; but it evidently refers only to those special regulations and laws which have been always made use of in all abbeys or congregations of abbeys, to develop and complete the fundamental rule. That this rule was known and followed in the Northumbrian monasteries, is plain from the exhortation of Benedict Biscop to his monks regarding their choice of a successor, in which he enjoins them to proceed "juxta quod regula magni quondam abbatis Benedicti, juxta quod privilegii nostri continent decreta."—Cf. MABILLON, *Præfatio in Sæculum Benedictinum*, n. 88, 89.

[2] "Vere dico vobis quod . . . tolerabilius mihi multo est totum hunc locum in quo monasterium feci . . . in solitudinem sempiternam redigi quam ut frater meus carnalis . . . in eo regendo pro me abbatis nomine succedat."

of these two tender friends should be accomplished, it was necessary to bring the dying coadjutor to the bed of the abbot. His head was placed on the same pillow; but they were both so feeble that they could not even embrace each other, and the help of brotherly hands was necessary to aid them.[1] All the monks assembled in chapter round this bed of suffering and love; and the two aged saints, having pointed out among them a successor approved by all, breathed together, with a short interval between, their last breath. Thus died, at the age of sixty-two, St. Benedict of England, a worthy rival of the great patriarch of the monks of the West, whose robe and name he bore, being, like him, a victor over sin and master of all virtue.[2]

The monk proposed by the two dying saints to the choice of their brethren, to replace them as abbot of the two monasteries, was the same Ceolfrid who had accompanied Benedict to Rome and to Canterbury, and who was already abbot of Yarrow. Like all the chiefs of the great Northumbrian communities, with the exception of Cuthbert, he proceeded from the highest rank of Anglo-Saxon nobility. His father bore the dignity of *ealdorman*, the highest rank after the blood-royal, and was famed for his magnificence. On one occasion, when he expected a visit from the king, the news of the sudden incursion of some enemy obliged the prince to depart before beginning the magnificently prepared repast, upon which the earl assembled all the poor of the quarter, put them in the place of the king and his attendants, and, when they were all seated, served the men

[1] "Egfridus in feretro deportaretur ad cubiculum ubi Benedictus et ipse suo jacebat in grabato . . . caput utriusque in eodem cervicali locaretur . . . vel tantum habuere virium, ut propius posita ora ad osculandum se alterutrum conjungere possent, sed et hoc fraterno compleverunt officio." —*Vitæ Abbat.*, c. 10.

[2] "Vitiorum victor Benedictus et virtutum patrator egregius victus infirmitate carnis ad extrema pervenit. . . . Anima illa sancta longis flagellorum felicium excocta atque examinata flammis luteam carnis fornacem deserit."—*Ibid.*, c. 11. He died January 12, 690, at the age of sixty-two.

with his own hands, while his countess performed the same office for the women.

Ceolfrid, who became a monk at eighteen, had been trained at Ripon, in the school of Wilfrid, who ordained him priest after ten years of study.[1] After this, in order to understand better the traditions and obligations of his profession, he visited the monastic metropolis of Canterbury, and on his way back spent some time with an old abbot named Botulph, whose virtues and knowledge were much renowned.[2] Botulph, too, was of a noble family of East Anglia;[3] his parents were among the oldest Christians of England, and had sent him while quite young across the sea into a monastery in Gaul, to learn, says his biographer, the glories of the faith, and to train himself to apostolical life. When he returned some years after, furnished with recommendations from two young East Anglian princesses whom he had met in his Gaulish monastery, he gained the heart of the kings of his tribe. These princes offered him lands which were already under cultivation, and were even allotted, according to feudal law, to other proprietors; but Botulph refused to have any one impoverished for his advan-

[1] The elder brother of Ceolfrid had been abbot of Gilling, the monastery founded by Queen Eanfleda to expiate her husband's crime in murdering the holy King Oswin; afterwards preferring contemplation to an active life, he exiled himself to Ireland, and there spent the rest of his life in the study of Holy Scripture. He died, together with several other English nobles, of the plague. This is a fresh example of the frequent relations of the Anglo-Saxons with monastic Ireland. Ceolfrid commenced his career at Gilling, from whence he was summoned to Ripon with the whole community, by Wilfrid.

[2] "Ut videret instituta Botulfi abbatis quem . . . fama circumquaque vulgaverat."—*Histor. Abbatum*, in *Append.* BEDE, p. 417.

[3] *Ad Anglos Orientales*, says the Life of Ceolfrid just cited; and this designation does not contradict that of *Angli Australes*, used by the contemporary author of the Life of St. Botulph, published by Mabillon (*Act. SS. O. S. B.* sæc. iii. pars i. p. 3). The Angles of Mercia and East Anglia were in fact southerners in the eyes of the Angles of Northumbria. Besides, two of the kings named in the biography as sovereigns of Botulph's country, Adelher and Adelwold, figure among the East Anglian kings. —*See* LAPPENBERG, Genealogical Table E at the end of his first volume.

tage, and preferred an uncultivated estate, situated on a little river not far from the Northern Sea,[1] where he founded the great monastery of Icanhoe, which has since grown into a town, and has borrowed its modern name, Boston, from that of its founder (*Botulph's town*).[2] Botolph's chief aim was to build and regulate his monastery on the model of the communities where he had lived, or which he had visited on the continent—that is to say, in strict conformity with the rule of St. Benedict. He lived there for more than half a century, surrounded by the veneration and love of his countrymen, and working steadily to secure the complete observance of Benedictine laws in his community—a procedure which in the district where he had established himself did not fail to appear a grave innovation. The care which his biographer, a contemporary of his own, takes to set forth this distinctive feature, which ran through his whole life, makes it apparent that he had to contend with the resistance of his monks, and that he only succeeded by sometimes sacrificing his natural humility and his popularity to the austere duties of his abbatial charge. He repeated daily to his disciples the laws and lessons which he had brought from beyond sea; and even on his deathbed, during the attacks of sickness which consumed his old age, he never ceased to recall the recollections of his monastic journeys, and to boast the gentleness and beauty of the true rule.[3]

[1] "Ut ubi plenius addiscerent et Sanctæ Fidei gloriam, et sanctæ conversationis in apostolicis institutionibus disciplinam. . . . Petit simpliciter, non ut aliquem regia violentia de hereditario jure caussa sui depellat, sed potius ut de incultis terris . . . sibi tantum concedat."—*Vita S. Botulfi*, c. 2 and 5.

[2] Situated on the Witham, in Lincolnshire: the English town of Boston gave its name to the celebrated capital of Massachusetts, the fame and influence of which, in North America, have been always so considerable.

[3] "Imperitis vitæ regularis attulit normam, et in monasticis observationibus magnus legislator antea incognitam docuit viam. . . . Ad instar monasteriorum ubi conversatus fuerat in partibus Galliæ cæptum opus perfecit. . . . Quod transmarinis partibus didicerat de monachorum

Imbued with the teaching of this great doctor of monastic life, Ceolfrid returned to Ripon, to redouble his zeal and fervour in the practice of his profession. When he became master of the novices at Ripon, the son of the ealdorman distinguished himself by his energy in all those manual labours which must have been so repugnant to the pride and habits of the Anglo-Saxon nobles. Without giving up his priestly functions, he took charge of the bakehouse, and was daily to be found at the furnace occupied in cleaning or heating it, and in baking bread for the use of the house.[1] His fame reached the ears of Benedict Biscop, who, as soon as he began his enterprise, asked him from Wilfrid. His request was granted; and this is the sole evidence which exists in history of any link whatever between the celebrated Bishop of York and the great monasteries founded by the friend of his youth. After his transfer to Wearmouth, Ceolfrid was soon made the deputy, as prior, of Abbot Benedict, during his journeys. But he found among the new monks certain sons of nobles like himself, who refused to be controlled by the severe discipline which he enforced upon them both by precept and example, and who pursued him with their murmurs and calumnies.[2] The effect of this upon him was such that, taking advantage of the absence of Benedict, he gave up his charge and returned to Ripon, to resume his former life there. Benedict hastened after him, and brought him back by dint of entreaties. After this he never relaxed his hold upon Ceolfrid, taking him with him in all his journeys up to the day when, as has been seen, he confided

districtiori vita et regulari consuetudine, memoriter repetendo quotidianis inculcationibus subditos consuescit . . . Appropinquante vitæ termino de observandis regulis monasteriorum quæ peregrinus petierat, loqui et sæpius repetere dulce ac delectabiliter ducebat."—*Vita S. Botulfi*, c. 4, 7, 9, 10.

[1] "Pistorii officium tenens, inter cribrandum clibanumque accendendum mundandumque, et panes in eo coquendos, presbyteratus ceremonias sedulus discere simul et exercere non omisit."—*Append.*, p. 417.

[2] "Invidias quorundam nobilium, qui regularem ejus disciplinam ferre nequibant, insecutionesque patiebatur acerrimas."—*Append.*, p. 418.

the government of the new monastery of Yarrow to him whom he wished to make his inseparable companion and fellow-labourer.[1]

Ceolfrid took with him twenty- twomonks from Wearmouth, to fill up the new foundation; but among these there were several who could not yet sing or even read aloud the service in the choir according to the requirements of the monastic ritual. Ceolfrid had to complete their musical and liturgical education, at the same time as he began that of the new-comers who soon thronged to Yarrow. By dint of entering himself into all the studies and exercises of his community, even in their minutest details, until the Benedictine observances took permanent root among them, he succeeded in his task. And he had to wield the trowel as well as the crosier, in order to direct and complete in less than two years the construction of the new abbey church, in which King Egfrid himself fixed the situation of the great altar.[2]

Ceolfrid, when placed by the death of his friend at the head of the two monasteries of Wearmouth and Yarrow, which then formed one community of six hundred monks,[3] displayed for twenty-seven years an unwearying activity and superior intelligence, as well as all the virtues of ascetic life. He was in every respect a worthy successor of Benedict: he took pains to enrich the two libraries, which were so great an object of care to his predecessor; and on occasion made use of his books for other purposes than the instruction of his monks. It is true that he had to deal with a learned

[1] "Ipse illi comes individuus, cooperator et doctor regularis et monasticæ institutionis aderat."—*Vitæ*, c. 16.

[2] "Sed juvet amor religionis et studiosi rectoris exemplum atque instantia sollers, qui donec illum observantiæ regularis radicem fieret, horis omnibus canonicis cum fratribus ecclesiam frequentare, refici et quiescere solebat."—*Append.*, p. 420.

[3] "Utrique monasterio, vel sicut rectius dicere possumus, in duobus locis posito uni monasterio. . . . Relictis in suis monasteriis fratribus numero ferme sexcentis."—*Vitæ Abbatum*, c. 12, 13.

king, trained at Iona, the enemy of Wilfrid and his Roman predilections, but as much a lover of books as any saint or monk, either Irish like Columba, or Anglo-Saxon like Biscop. The latter had brought from Rome a curious system of cosmography, which King Aldfrid burned to possess, and which he obtained from the Abbot Ceolfrid in exchange for land supporting eight families. The abbot afterwards found means of exchanging this estate, with the addition of a sum of money, for another estate twice or three times as large, situated opposite the monastery of Yarrow, to which belonged the precious book which was the occasion of a traffic so lucrative.[1] It must not be supposed from this that the great abbot was interested or mercenary; he had, on the contrary, retained in the cloister the generous habits of his noble race; and Bede expressly tells that he never received a present or donation from neighbouring lords without giving them, as soon as possible, an equivalent.[2]

Let us add, while speaking of books, that he had two complete copies made of the Bible, according to the version of St. Jerome, which he had brought from Rome, and placed them in his two churches, that they might be read and consulted by all who wished to do so[3]—a new refutation, among so many others, of the stupid calumny which represents the

[1] "Bibliothecam utriusque monasterii . . . non minori germinavit industria. . . . Dato Cosmographorum codice mirandi operis . . . terram octo familiarum . . . ab Alfrido regi in Scripturis doctissimo . . . comparavit, quem comparandi ordinem ipse dum adhuc viveret, Benedictus . . . taxaverat, sed prius quam complere potuisset, obiit. . . . Verum pro hac terra postmodum, Osredo regnante, addito pretio digno, terram xx. familiarum . . . accepit."—*Vitæ*, c. 12.

[2] "A viris principalibus quibus cunctis erat honorabilis . . . hanc habens semper consuetudinem, ut si quis ei aliquid muneris offerret, hoc illi vel statim vel post intervallum competens, non minore gratia rependeret."—C. 13. It is evident that they were already, even in the most fervent and exemplary communities, far from a state of primitive poverty.

[3] "Totidem per duo sua monasteria posuit in ecclesiis, ut *cunctis*, qui aliquod capitulum de utrolibet Testamento legere voluissent, in promptu esset invenire quod cuperent."—*Vita Ceolfridi*, in *Append.* BEDÆ, *Op. Min.*, a. 325.

Church as having in former times interdicted to her children the knowledge of the Sacred Scriptures.

Ceolfrid's anxiety for the intellectual and material interests of his community did nowise diminish his zeal for the regular discipline and spiritual independence of his brethren. He took pains to have the charter of immunity obtained from Agathon renewed by the Pope St. Sergius, and confirmed in full synod by King Aldfrid. He devoted a considerable portion of each day, and his unwearying attention, to the prayers and sacred song of the choir; neither age nor sickness, nor even travel, seemed to him sufficient reasons for dispensing with this. Severe as it was his duty to be against the least irregularity, he lavished on the weak encouragements and consolations, and was hard only to himself, his living and clothing being of a temperance which seemed at that time surprising in the chief of so powerful an institution.[1]

When he had passed his seventieth year, he no longer found himself strong enough to give to his monks an example of life conformed to the rule; and he was anxious, besides, to return before he died to Rome, where he had in his youth accompanied his friend and master, there to prepare himself for death in silence. In vain the monks, when informed of his design, threw themselves on their knees to keep him back. Nothing could change his purpose. As soon as he had formed his resolution he put it in practice, fearing that if it were known he might be disturbed from without by entreaties, or even by the presents[2] of the friends he had among the nobility of the neighbourhood, and indeed of all Northumbria. Three days after having declared his decision to the afflicted community, he said mass in the morning very early, gave the communion to all present, and, standing

[1] "Acutus ingenio, actis impiger . . . per incomparabilem orandi psallendique sollertiam, qua ipse quotidianus exerceri non desiit . . . post insolitam rectoribus et escæ potusque parcitatem."

[2] "Ne pecunia daretur ei a quibusdam, quibus retribuere pro tempore nequiret."

on the steps of the altar with the censer in his hand, blessed all his children. They began to sing litanies, which were interrupted by tears and sobs; Ceolfrid then led them to an oratory, which he had dedicated to the martyr St. Lawrence, near the dormitory, and there addressed to them, as Benedict had done on his deathbed, a last exhortation. Its special subject was charity and mutual brotherly correction; and he entreated all those who might have found him too hard to pardon him and pray for him. From thence he descended to the bank of the river which bathes the walls of the monastery, followed by the six hundred monks of the two communities; after having received from their father a last kiss moistened with tears, they all knelt down. The old abbot then entered the ship that was to carry him away; and from the deck, on which the cross had been reared between two torches, he gave them his last benediction and disappeared from their sight.

Ceolfrid himself could not contain his grief at this parting; at the distant sound of the chants of his monks broken by their sobs, his tears flowed. Again and again he was heard to say, "Christ, my Lord and my God, have pity on this worthy and numerous company. Protect these dear children. I am sure that better or more obedient are nowhere to be found."[1]

When they re-entered the monastery, the monks proceeded on the spot to the election of the new abbot. At the end of three days the universal suffrage of the two com-

[1] "Omnibus in lacrymas singultusque genua cum obsecratione crebra flectentibus. . . . Cantata ergo primo mane missa . . . conveniunt omnes . . . pacem dat omnibus, thuribulum habens in manu: tunc fletibus universorum inter Letanias resonantibus, exeunt . . . veniunt ad littus, rursum osculo pacis inter lacrymas omnibus dato, genua flectunt . . . ascendit navem . . . transit flumen, adorat crucem, ascendit equum et abiit."—C. 13. "Audiensque sonum mixti cum luctu carminis, nullatenus valuit ipse a singultu et lacrymis temperare. Hoc autem solum crebra voce repetiit: Christe Deus, miserere illi cœtui . . . protege illam cohortem . . . scio certissime quia nullos unquam meliores illis et promptiores ad obedientiam novi."—*Append.*, p. 425.

munities fixed upon a young man, trained at Wearmouth from his infancy, and worthy of his illustrious predecessors, in his zeal for study, song, and teaching, as their united chief. As soon as he was elected, the new abbot rushed after Ceolfrid, and found him in the port waiting a favourable wind for crossing to the Continent. He gave him a letter to the Pope, from which we quote the following passages:—

"To the blessed Pope Gregory II., our dear lord in the Lord of lords, Huetberct, your humble servant, abbot of the monastery of St. Peter, prince of the apostles, among the Saxons, everlasting greeting.—In the name of all my brethren, united in this place with me to find rest for their souls and to bear the sweet yoke of Christ, we recommend to your dear and holy kindness the hoary hairs of our venerable and beloved father, the Abbot Ceolfrid, who has ruled, trained, fed, and defended us in monastic peace and freedom. He has torn himself from us in the midst of our lamentations, tears, and sorrow; but we thank the holy and invisible Trinity that it has been given him to attain to the blessed joy of rest which he has so long desired. He returns in his extreme old age to the tombs of the apostles, his visits to which in youth he has always remembered with enthusiasm. After forty years of work and care in his monastic government, he shows himself as much inspired by the love of virtue as though he were still in the first freshness of his conversion; and on the threshold of death, bent under the weight of age, he again becomes a pilgrim for Christ. We conjure your Paternity, render to this beloved father those last duties of filial piety which it will not be permitted to us to accomplish. Afterwards you will keep his body; but his soul will remain with us both—with us and with you; and after his death, as during his life, we shall find in him a friend, a protector, and intercessor with God."[1]

[1] "Eligitur Huætberctus . . . scribendi, cantandi, legendi ac docendi non parva exercitatus industria . . . electus abbas ab omnibus

The wishes of the double community of Wearmouth and Yarrow, thus expressed with so much filial affection, were not fulfilled. Ceolfrid never reached Rome; the fatigues of the journey aggravated the weakness of his old age. He took three months to travel from Northumbria to the frontiers of Burgundy. During these three months he did not cease for a single day to celebrate mass and sing the entire monastic service, even when his weakness prevented him from moving except in a litter.[1] He was able to travel only as far as Langres, where he died at the age of seventy-four—forty-three years of his age having been consecrated to the work of training or governing souls in the cloister. He was buried in a monastery, afterwards known by the name of St. Geosmes, and which took that name from the twins who, along with their grandmother, St. Leonilla, were martyred there under the Cæsars.[2] His austere life did not prevent him from travelling with all the retinue of a great personage, as indeed the abbot of the greatest community of the Anglo-Saxons of the North already was. Of the eighty English who composed his suite some continued

utriusque monasterii fratribus. . . . Una cum sanctis fratribus qui mecum in his locis ad inveniendam requiem animabus suis suavissimum Christi jugum portare desiderant. . . . Commendamus . . . venerabiles patris nostri dilectissimi canos . . . nutritoris tutorisque nostræ spiritualis in monastica quiete libertatis et pacis. . . . Ad suæ tamen diu desideratæ quietis gaudia sancta pervenit . . . dum ea quæ juvenem se adiisse atque adorasse semper recordans exultabat . . . repetiit . . . prope jam moriturus, rursus incipit peregrinari pro Christo. . . . Supplicamus ut quod nos facere non meruimus, vos erga illum ultimæ pietatis munus seduli expleatis."—*Vitæ Abbatum*, c. 14.

[1] "Per dies cxiv., exceptis canonicis horis, quotidie bis psalterium ex ordine decantare curavit, etiam cum ad hoc per infirmitatem deveniret, ut equitare non valens feretro caballario veheretur, quotidie missa cantata salutaris hostiæ Deo munus offerret, excepto uno, quo oceanum navigabat, et tribus ante exitum diebus."

[2] Their names were Speusippus, Eleusippus, and Meleusippus. The mention of these martyrs leads me to point out in passing the singularly instructive and conclusive examination given to this history by M. l'Abbé Bougaud in his learned *Etude sur la Mission, les Actes, et le Culte de Saint Bénigne, Apôtre de la Bourgogne.* Dijon, 1859, pp. 171, 172.

their pilgrimage to Rome, others returned to England, and some preferred to pass the rest of their lives in the midst of a people whose language they did not understand, rather than separate themselves from the tomb of a father to whom they clung with an unchangeable love.[1]

I beg my readers to make an effort to represent to themselves who these eighty companions of old Ceolfrid were, and who also were, and from whence came, the six hundred Anglo-Saxons whom we have just seen kneeling on the sandy beach, on the shore of the Northern Sea, to receive the blessing of our aged abbot, going forth to brave the danger and fatigues of a laborious journey, with the hope of dying near the tomb of St. Peter and St. Paul. I would fain see the coldest and most bitter of sceptics transported for an instant in thought to that far distant shore. I should accompany him willingly, with no intermediary between him and me except simple good faith.

We should then find ourselves in the eighth century, in all its darkness, in all its barbarism, in an island destined to become again and again the prey of bloody and atrocious invasions. These are the sons of pirates, of incendiaries, of ravagers and murderers, who surround us. Yet see what they have become! Not all, certainly, but the first and most powerful, those in whom the abuse of strength, victory, and wealth would have produced most scandal and excess. See what the Christian religion has made of those wild hearts; look at the flowers which have blossomed by its means in that soil watered with blood and horror. Behold its fruits, its victories, its conquests, its chief spoil. Religion has established herself on that desolated land, amid these pitiless conquerors. She has shown them peace, gentleness, labour, virtue, truth, light, heaven; and after having thus

[1] "Partim ad tumbam defuncti inter eos quorum nec linguam noverant, pro inextinguibili patris affectus rendere."—*Vitæ Abbatum*, c. 15.

lavished upon them a treasury of new thoughts, beliefs, and strength, new food for their intelligence, and unknown resources for their social order, she has taught them to love, to love one another, to love souls—and to imprint the recollection of that love upon scenes and words which cannot deceive and will not be forgotten.

CHAPTER III

END OF THE CELTIC HERESY.—ADAMNAN, EGBERT, ST. ALDHELM

The king of the Picts requests Ceolfrid to send him architects, and arguments in favour of Roman unity.—Answer of Ceolfrid, in which he quotes from Plato.—The Picts abandon the Celtic peculiarities.—The monks of Iona leave their monasteries rather than adopt the Roman ritual.—Their abbot, Adamnan, biographer of Columba, and the last great personage of the Celtic Church.—His relations with King Aldfrid and the abbot Ceolfrid.—He attempts in vain to lead the monks of Iona back to Roman rule, but has more success in Ireland, where he dies.—Iona is brought back to Catholic unity by the Anglo-Saxon Egbert, the head of a colony of Saxon monks in Ireland.—His austere and holy life.—He loses his most intimate friend, who reproaches him for desiring to survive him.—He uses his influence with the Anglo-Saxons to send them as missionaries to Germany.—After thirteen years' struggle, he overcomes the resistance of Iona, and dies on the very day when the feast of Easter is celebrated by both parties together.—Ireland and Caledonia having been thus brought back to Catholic unity, only the Britons of Cambria and Cornwall remain outside its pale, by reason of their national antipathy for the Saxon conquerors.—Note upon Bede's injustice to them.—Attempt of St. Aldhelm to bring them in.—His royal birth, and education—half Celtic, half Roman—at Malmesbury and Canterbury.—He becomes abbot of Malmesbury.—His literary fame greater than his merit; his vernacular songs; intellectual development of Anglo-Saxon cloisters.—Extent and variety of his studies.—His continual solicitude for souls.—His great monastic character.—His zeal for preaching.—He interferes in favour of Wilfrid.—He goes to Rome to obtain the privilege of exemption for Malmesbury, the monks of which persist in retaining him as abbot, even after his promotion to the episcopate.—Anecdote about the importation of Bibles.—Death of Aldhelm.—His exertions for bringing back Celtic dissenters.—His letter to the king of Cornwall.—The Britons of Cambria, who had resisted all the efforts of Roman and Saxon missionaries, adopt the Roman ritual by the influence of one of their own bishops.—Their pilgrimages to Rome.—End of the struggle.—Opinion of Mabillon.—Resistance proportioned to

the dangers which beset the special nationality.—Union the work of Benedictines.—In the Britannic Isles, as among the Gauls, Celtic monasticism conquered and eclipsed by the Benedictine order.

THE memory of Ceolfrid, along with that of his faithful English, has faded out of the country in which he died. But he belongs nevertheless to the general history of the Church by the direct influence which he exercised upon the conclusion of that great struggle between Celtic Christianity and Roman unity which had agitated the British Isles for more than a century, and which had cost so many holy monks, from Augustin to Wilfrid, so much anxious thought and effort. Ceolfrid, trained in the school of Wilfrid, had the glory of giving the last blow to that species of schism which Wilfrid to his cost had conquered; and this supreme victory was won at the very time when Wilfrid concluded in obscurity his long and laborious career.

A year after the death of Wilfrid, Nechtan, the king of those Picts who occupied the north of Caledonia, the successor of that Bruidh who received the great Celtic apostle Columba, wrote to Abbot Ceolfrid a memorable letter. This tributary king was not only a Christian, but greatly occupied by religious questions. He meditated much on the Holy Scriptures, and was thus led to understand, and to regret, the advantages of Catholic unity, from which his nation was to a certain extent separate by the paschal question. He resolved to lead back his people to the Roman rule, notwithstanding the obstinate resistance of the monks of Iona, the sons of St. Columba, who continued the apostolical work of their patriarch. To overcome their opposition, he determined, in one of the singular revolutions of mortal affairs, to address himself to that Northumbria which had been evangelised by Celtic missionaries from Iona, imbued with the traditional error of their race, but which he knew to have already conformed to the rules of the Roman Church. At the same time, in seeking the aid of the Anglo-Saxon Church, he did not apply either to the bishops who had divided among

themselves Wilfrid's spoil, nor even to the great monastery of Lindisfarne, which had been so long the point of junction between the two races. Instead, he knocked at the door of the new sanctuaries on the banks of the Wear and Tyne, to which Benedict Biscop had given the highest place in public veneration; he asked the aid of Abbot Ceolfrid, who for twenty years had worthily occupied the place of the holy traveller. He sent to him a special embassy to ask of him good arguments, set forth in writing, with which to refute the partisans of Celtic ritualism in respect to Easter and the tonsure;[1] and at the same time prayed the abbot to send him architects to build him a church of stone, like the Romans, promising to dedicate the church, when built, to the honour of St. Peter, and to follow with all his people the observances of the Roman Church as much as the distance and difference of language permitted them to do.[2]

Ceolfrid sent him architects, who were, without doubt, monks of his community, and whose mission thus gives us the exact date of the introduction of Christian architecture into Scotland, where up to that moment the churches were made of wood, or osiers, in the Irish fashion. He wrote at the same time to the Pictish king a long letter which Bede has preserved to us, and in which he begins by quoting, not the Scriptures or the Fathers, but Plato, in that well-known passage in the *Republic* where it is said that, for the happiness of the world, it is necessary that kings should be philosophers, or philosophers kings. In the legitimate glory of the greatest thinker of antiquity there is, perhaps, no ray

[1] "Naiton . . . admonitus ecclesiasticarum frequenti meditatione scripturarum. . . . Quæsivit auxilium de gente Anglorum quos jamdudum ad exemplum S. Romanæ et Apostolicæ Ecclesiæ suam religionem instituisse cognovit. . . . Postulans ut exhortatorias sibi litteras mitteret, quibus potentius confortare posset eos qui Pascha non suo tempore observare præsumerent. . . . Sed et architectos . . . qui juxta morem Romanorum ecclesiam de lapide in gente ipsius facerent."—BEDE, *Hist. Eccles.*, v. 21.

[2] "In quantum dumtaxat tam longe a Romanorum loquela et natione segregati nunc ediscere potuissent."

purer or more precious than that invocation of his name and authority, more than a thousand years after his death, by a Saxon prelate to a Celtic king, both sprung from races totally unknown to Greece and her great men. "But," adds Ceolfrid, "if a man of the world was right in thinking and speaking thus, in what concerns the philosophy of this world, how much more ought the citizens of the celestial country, exiled here below, to desire that the great ones of this earth should apply themselves to know the laws of the Supreme Judge, and, by their example and authority, to make these laws observed. Thus we take it as a mark of heavenly favour bestowed on the Church each time that the masters of the world apply themselves to know, to teach, and to keep the truth."[1] Thereupon he enters into a theological and astronomical discussion, in which, passing in review the text of the Pentateuch, and the various cycles used from the time of Eusebius to that of Denis the Little, he proves that Easter ought to be celebrated, according to the usage of the Catholic Church, in the third week of the first lunar month, and always on Sunday. As for the tonsure, he admits that it is, in itself, an indifferent matter; but he insists upon the fabulous tradition, which all the orthodox then held as an article of faith, by which the Roman tonsure, in the form of a crown, was attributed to St. Peter, and the Irish tonsure, in which the front of the head was shaven, to Simon the Magician.

The letter of the Northumbrian abbot, which appears to modern readers long and wearisome, was completely successful. It was read publicly to the Pictish king, in presence of all the wise men of the country, translated verbally into their language. As soon as he had heard it, he rose, and, in the midst of the nobles by whom he was surrounded,

[1] "Vere omnino dixit quidam secularium scriptorum. . . . Quod si de philosophia hujus mundi vere intelligere et de statu hujus mundi merito dicere potuit homo hujus mundi, quanto magis cœlestis patriæ civibus."—BEDE, *Hist. Eccles.*, v. 21.

knelt down and thanked God to have been so fortunate as to have received such a present from England. "I knew well," he said, "that this was the true way of celebrating Easter. But now I see the reason so clearly that I seem to have understood nothing about it before. For this cause, I take you all to witness, all you who sit with me here, that I will henceforward keep Easter thus, with all my people, and I ordain that all the clerks in my kingdom assume this tonsure."[1] The ordinance was immediately put in operation, and the messengers of the king carried into all the provinces copies of the paschal calculation, with orders to efface the ancient tables. The monks and other ecclesiastics had also to receive the tonsure according to the Roman custom. Bede affirms that the change was received with universal joy in the Pictish nation. Nevertheless, the monks who had come from Iona—those of the *family of Columb-kill*, the *Columbites*, as Ceolfrid calls them—acted as their brethren at Ripon and Lindisfarne had acted fifty years before. They preferred to leave their establishments, colonies founded more than a century before by their patriarch and his disciples, rather than to give up their insular tradition. A single line, short but expressive, in the annals of Ireland, bears witness to their fate. It is thus summed up—"King Nechtan expels the family of Iona from the country beyond the *dorsum Britanniæ*."[2]

The country now called Scotland was then divided, as has been seen, between the Picts in the north and east, the Scots in the west, the Britons in Strathclyde, and the Northumbrians in the south. The supremacy of the Nor-

[1] "Epistola, præsente rege Naitono, multisque viris doctioribus lecta ac diligenter ab his qui intelligere potuerant in linguam ejus propriam interpretata . . . exsurgens de medio optimatum sacro in consessu. . . . In tantum modo rationem hujus temporis observandi cognosco, ut parum mihi omnino videar de his antea intellexisse."—BEDE, *Hist. Eccles.*, v. 21.

[2] "Expulsio familiæ Ie trans dorsum Britanniæ a Nectano rege."—*Annales Tigernachii*, ad ann. 717. See vol. iii. p. 64 for the description of the mountain-range called *dorsum Britanniæ*.

thumbrian kings, up to the downfall of Egfrid, over all the districts south of the Clyde and Forth, had been sufficient to secure, in that part of the country, the observance of the Roman ritual, represented by such men as Wilfrid and Cuthbert. The conversion of the Picts, under king Nechtan, to the Roman rule, in respect to Easter, established liturgical and theological unity throughout the northern part of Great Britain, with the exception of the isle of Iona and the little kingdom of the Dalriadian Scots, which probably to the last extremity remained faithful to the ritual and traditions of their national sanctuary.

Yet, notwithstanding, a very eminent Irish monk—Adamnan, himself abbot of Iona, and the most illustrious of Columba's successors—had long attempted to lead back the mother community, mistress of all the Caledonian Church, and always influential in the Church of Ireland, to the unity of Rome. If our readers have retained in their recollection our narrative of St. Columba, they will pardon us for dwelling a little upon his biographer, of all the Irish monks the one to whom posterity is most indebted, for his revelation to us, not only of that great man, the immortal honour of the Celtic Church—but also of the spirit, general and individual, and the private and local life of that whole Church. He was the countryman and near relative of his holy predecessor, sprung, like him, from the sovereign race of the Nialls. When he was but a scholar, having been dedicated from his childhood to monastic life, he had, according to the legend, gained the favour of a powerful chief—Finnachta the Feaster or Banqueter. While begging, according to the usage of the time, for himself and his five companions, each of whom took it in turn to seek the daily nourishment, he met the cavalcade of the chief, and in running out of the way struck against a stone, fell, and broke the milk-jar which he carried on his back, and which contained all he had collected.[1] "Be not sad," said the chief, "I will protect

[1] REEVES, *Append. ad Præf.*, p. xlii.

thee." When Finnachta became monarch of all Ireland, Adamnan was his *Anmachara* or spiritual counsellor; and this fact explains the important part he played in Ireland during his whole life. After having been a monk at Iona under three abbots, he was himself elected abbot in 679. Aldfrid, the Northumbrian prince, brother and successor of Egfrid, then an exile in Ireland, had taken refuge in Iona, and had become the friend and the disciple of Adamnan; and when, after Egfrid's downfall, the exile became king of Northumberland, the abbot went to his former guest to reclaim the captives, men and women, whom the soldiers of Egfrid had carried away in the previous year, after their cruel and bloody invasion of Ireland.[1] His mission was not entirely without success; for he obtained from his friend the restitution of sixty prisoners, whom he himself accompanied back to Ireland. He returned on more than one occasion to visit King Aldfrid, whose literary tastes resembled his own. He dedicated to him his description of the holy places, which he compiled from the narratives of a Gallo-Frankish bishop called Arculfe, who, returning from Palestine by sea, had been shipwrecked on the coast of Ireland, from whence he had gone to visit the still celebrated sanctuary of Iona. Thanks to the liberality of the learned King Aldfrid, whose taste for geographical studies we have already remarked, a great number of copies were made of this treatise, that it might be largely distributed and read even by the lower classes.[2]

It was during these journeys to and fro that the cultivated and fervent abbot[3] learned to understand the new customs introduced into the Anglo-Saxon Church by the efforts of

[1] See above, p. 57.

[2] "Per ejus eis largitionem etiam minoribus ad legendum contraditus."—BEDE, v. 15. Bede has inserted many extracts of this description in his History; Mabillon publishes it entire at the end of vol. iv. of his *Acta Sanctorum*.

[3] "Erat vir bonus et sapiens et scientia scripturarum nobilissime instructus . . . abbas et sacerdos Columbiensium egregius."—*Ibid.*, v. 16, 21.

Wilfrid, and although there is no trace in his life of any actual encounter between him and the great champion of Roman unity, it is certain that Adamnan, while in Northumbria, was so thoroughly moved by the spirit there diffused by Wilfrid, that he left the country with the resolution of henceforward preferring the rites of the universal Church to those of a little nation at the end of the world.[1] Ceolfrid did much to enlighten him on this point; in his letter to the king of the Picts he relates the visit of Adamnan to Wearmouth, and their conferences on the subject of the tonsure. "Holy brother," said the Northumbrian abbot to the Irish prelate, "you aspire to an immortal crown, why do you wear on your head so imperfect an image of it? and if you desire the society of St. Peter, why do you bear the tonsure of him who anathematised St. Peter?" "Beloved brother," answered Adamnan, "if I bear the tonsure of Simon the Magician, according to the custom of my country, do not think that I detest the less the Simoniacal heresy. I desire to follow with my best powers the footsteps of the Prince of Apostles." "I believe it," said Ceolfrid, "but in that case it would be best to wear openly the mark of the Apostle Peter which you have in your heart."[2] It is apparent by this that the leader of the Irish Church did not even dispute the imputed origin, at once fabulous and injurious, of his national custom.

But when, on his return to Iona, he attempted to lead the children of St. Columba to his new conviction and to the Roman rule, he encountered an unconquerable resistance. To be treated as barbarians and rustics[3] by the Northumbrian monks and doctors troubled them little; they were

[1] "Cum videret ritus ecclesiæ canonicos . . . in ecclesiis Anglorum . . . cum suis paucissimus et in extremo mundi angulo positis . . . mutatus mente est."—BEDE, c. 15.

[2] "Scias pro certo . . . quia etsi Simonis tonsuram ex consuetudine patria habeam, simoniacam tamen perfidiam tota mente detestor ac respuo."—BEDE, v. 21.

[3] BEDE, iii. 4.

aware that their spiritual ancestors had been initiated into the Christian faith two centuries before the Anglo-Saxons, who for the most part had been drawn out of the darkness of paganism only by the apostolic self-devotion of those whom their descendants disdained. The Celts, accordingly, adhered obstinately to the traditional rites of their glorious ancestors. When they saw their chief return with the Roman tonsure, the surprise and indignation of the monks of Iona were such that they have found form in an Irish legend.[1] The difference between the superior and the community became so painful that Adamnan, who was of a humble and peaceable character, could not hold head against it. Without abdicating, he yet ceased to live in his monastery, and passed a great part of the remainder of his life in Ireland.[2] He dedicated himself with ardour to the work of reunion, meeting there with much greater success than in his own community. Southern Ireland, as has been seen, had already returned to Roman unity, even before Wilfrid undertook his great work in England. Adamnan was the means of bringing back central and northern Ireland to the same rule. He procured the triumph specially of the Roman Easter and the orthodox tonsure, except in the communities directly under the sway of his own monastery at Iona. This victory was not won without great difficulty, but his gentleness and modesty

[1] MAC FIRBIS or FORBES.—*Irish Annals*, MS. quoted by Reeves, p. xli.

[2] The annals of Ireland give his presence there in 692 and 697. At the latter date he gave forth the *Law of Innocents*, or of Adamnan (see vol. iii. p. 160). His books were written in the midst of his journeys and pastoral cares, as he says in the preamble of his treatise *De Locis Sanctis*: "Quæ et ego, quamlibet inter laboriosas et prope insustentabiles tota die undique conglobatas ecclesiasticas sollicitudines constitutus, vili quamvis sermone descripens declaravi." He wrote his *Life of St. Columba* between his two journeys from Ireland, from 692 to 697. He says nothing in it of his difference with his own monks in respect to Easter, but he mentions the prophecy of Columba at Clonmacnoise upon discord: "Quæ post dies multos ob diversitatem Paschalis festi orta est inter Scotiæ ecclesias." He remained in Ireland probably from 697 to 703, a period at which, according to Bede, he was still there. It was not too much for the difficult task he had to fulfil.

triumphed over all.[1] He died the same year as his friend, the wise King Aldfrid. Before his death, and after having celebrated in Ireland the canonical Easter, he made a last attempt to win over the family of Columba, which he had governed for thirty years. It was in vain; all his entreaties were repulsed; but God graciously granted, says Bede, that this man, who loved unity and peace above everything, should attain to eternal life before the return of the paschal solemnity made the discord between himself and his disobedient monks notorious.[2]

The victory which Adamnan, the countryman and successor of St. Columba, could not gain, was reserved for a man of another race but equal holiness—the Anglo-Saxon Egbert. The life of this monk is an example of the numerous and salutary relations which existed between the Irish Celts and the Anglo-Saxons, and which had been so odiously disturbed by the inexcusable invasion of the Northumbrian king Egfrid. It is in connection with this invasion that the name of Egbert has already appeared in this narrative.[3] He was one of the many English who crossed the sea in numbers so considerable as to fill entire fleets, and who threw themselves upon the Irish shore like flights of bees, to enjoy the hospitality, both intellectual and material, of the Irish monasteries; while, on the other hand, the Greek Theodore, Archbishop of Canterbury and Primate of England, lived, by a happy exchange of brotherly kindness, surrounded by a crowd of young Irish monks. Some of the Anglo-Saxons, who sought a superior ascetic education in the Irish monasteries, returned to England, frequently filling places of the

[1] "Prædicans eis modesta exhortatione . . . pene omnes qui ab Hiiensium dominio erant liberi, ab errore avito correctos ad unitatem reduxit catholicam."—BEDE, v. 15.

[2] Adamnan has always been venerated as a saint. See the article upon him, BOLLAND., vol. vii. Sept. 24th, and the Breviary of Aberdeen. It is asserted that he ate only twice in the week—Sunday and Thursday. —*Ann. des Quatre Maîtres*, ap. Reeves, p. lvii.

[3] See above, p. 58.

highest dignity there, and edifying their countrymen by their knowledge and virtue;[1] while others remained, casting in their lot for ever with the monastic ranks of Ireland.

Egbert stood in the first rank of those numerous scions of the Anglo-Saxon nobility who in their youth became voluntary exiles for Christ, in order to devote themselves in Ireland, far from their relations and their possessions, to a life of penitence, and, above all, to the study of the Holy Scriptures.[2] He was only twenty-five when the terrible pestilence broke out which, immediately after the first triumph of Wilfrid at the conference of Whitby, made such cruel ravages in the British Isles. He was then, with several of his countrymen, in a monastery, the site of which is at present represented by the picturesque ruins of Mellifont; he saw his companions dying around him daily, and when at last he was himself affected by the contagion, he had strength enough to leave the infirmary, and withdraw to a solitary place to review his life and weep over his sins. He had even the courage to pray God to spare his life until he had expiated the faults of his youth by good works, and made a vow if his prayer was granted to remain an exile for ever, and return to England no more. He then went in and lay down again, beside another young man, his closest and most intimate friend, who was mortally stricken, and lay in a sleep that was almost death. All at once the young sufferer awoke. "Ah, brother Egbert, what have you done?" he said. "I hoped so that we should have entered eternal life together; and now you let me die without you: know at

[1] Among others, Ceadda, the first rival of Wilfrid at York, and Ædilwin, of whom Bede says: "Ipse Hiberniam *gratia legendi* adiit, et bene instructus patriam rediit, atque episcopus in provincia Lindissi factus, multo ecclesiam tempore nobilissime rexit."—*Hist. Eccles.*, iii. 27. See what has been already said (p. 187, note 1) of the elder brother of Abbot Ceolfrid of Yarrow.

[2] "In Hibernia diutius exulaverat pro Christo . . . doctissimus in scripturis et longæ vitæ perfectione eximius. . . . De nobilibus Anglorum. . . . Quem peregrinam ducere vitam pro adipiscenda in cœlis patria retulimus."—*Hist. Eccles.*, v. 9.

least that your prayer is granted." The young man died that night; but Egbert survived for sixty-five years, and became a model of all monastic virtues. Not only did he call forth the affectionate admiration of his Anglo-Saxon countrymen, but even in Ireland, so fertile in marvels of holiness, he appeared an eminent saint. He emulated the most illustrious in his zeal for knowledge, in his eagerness to distribute to the poor the gifts lavished upon him by the rich, and in the austerities of his life. The great historian of the Christian glories of the Anglo-Saxon race has not disdained to inform us that during Lent, and even for forty days after Christmas, and fifty days after Whitsuntide, his entire nourishment consisted of a little bread, with milk from which the cream had been carefully removed. It was at this price that the right of speaking with authority to the nations, and of walking before them in the way of salvation, was purchased.[1]

He employed his influence over the two races which rivalled each other in honouring his holiness, only for their good, their honour, and the general welfare of the Church. Though he did not succeed, notwithstanding his entreaties, in turning Egfrid, the king of his native Northumbria, from the crime of his abominable invasion of Ireland, he was more fortunate with others of his countrymen, whom he transformed into missionaries of the faith to the Germans. In his ascetic exile in Ireland he was the first of the Anglo-Saxons to conceive the generous, the divine idea of sending

[1] "Egressus est tempore matutino de cubiculo in quo infirmi quiescebant . . . finitis lacrymis, precibus et votis. . . . Expergefactus sodalis respexit eum. . . . O frater Ecgbert, O quid fecisti? Sperabam quia pariter ad vitam æternam intraremus. . . . Unde et genti suæ et illis in quibus exulabat nationibus Scottorum sive Pictorum exemplo vivendi . . . multum profuit. . . . Quod lac pridie novum in phialia ponere solebat, et post noctem ablata superficie crassiore, ipse residuum cum modico pane bibebat."—BEDE, iii. 27. Bede, who is always careful to cite his authorities, informs us that he gathered all these particulars from a priest, "veracissimus et venerandæ canitiei," to whom Egbert had narrated his life. Bede, who was born in 673, was more than fifty when Egbert died.

to the help of the mother-country, to Germany, which still belonged to Satan, the sons of her Britannic colony to show her the path of virtue and of life.[1] He knew well whence it was that his Anglo-Saxon ancestors had come, and that they had left behind them in darkness a crowd of other tribes, of the same stock and language, whose image stole upon his imagination, as did that of the little Irish children whose plaintive voices St. Patrick heard in his dreams, and whose visionary appeals decided that saint, once a slave, to become the apostle of their country.[2]

Faithful to the vow which forbade him to land, even in passing, upon the soil of his native island, Egbert chartered a ship to take him direct from Ireland to Friesland, on the northern coast of Germany. But as he was about to embark, one of his travelling companions, who had been a monk at Melrose, lying down to sleep after matins, saw in a dream the prior Boswell, the tender friend of Cuthbert,[3] and beloved master of the novices at Melrose, one of the great saints of the Celtic Church in Northumbria, who charged him to warn Egbert that the will of God ordained him to give up his Germanic mission, and to devote himself, willingly or unwillingly, to the instruction and conversion of the Columbite monasteries. "Their ploughs do not go straight," said the prior to his former pupil; "they must be put back into the right furrow."[4] This dream, though twice repeated, made no impression upon Egbert; but his ship having been cast ashore, he acknowledged the

[1] "In Germania plurimas noverat esse nationes, a quibus Angli vel Saxones qui nunc Britanniam incolunt, genus et originem duxisse noscuntur. . . . Sunt autem Fresones, Rugini, Dani, Huni, antiqui Saxones, Boructuarii. . . . Christi miles circumnavigata Britannia disposuit si quos forte ex illis ereptos Satanæ ad Christum transferre valeret."—BEDE, v. 9.

[2] See vol. ii. p. 243.

[3] See above, pp. 129 and 141.

[4] "Cum expletis hymnis matutinalibus in lectulo membra posuissem . . . apparuit magister quondam meus et nutritor amantissimus. . . . Vade et dic illis quia, velit nolit, debet ad monasteria Columbæ venire, quia aratra eorum non recte incedunt."—BEDE, v. 9.

will of God, and gave up his cherished project so far as related to himself. As many, however, of the fervent and zealous monks among his own countrymen whom he could move to such a determination he sent in his place; when any returned discouraged by their want of success, he sought and found others more capable or more fortunate; and it was thus the beginning made by Egbert that gave to Germany Vicbert, Willibrord, Swidbert, the two Ewalds, and other holy bishops or abbots, whose names are justly venerated by Germany as her apostles, and whom we shall find again in the history of that country if it is permitted to us to pursue our task so far.

It was in the year of Ceolfrid's death, eleven years after the death of Adamnan, and seven years after that of Wilfrid, that the Anglo-Saxon Egbert succeeded in overcoming the most obstinate stronghold of Celtic dissidence, and procured the triumph of Roman unity in the monastic metropolis which had been founded by the most illustrious saint of the Celtic Church. A stranger of an alien and often hostile race thus accomplished the task in which Adamnan had failed. He was from the first received by the monks of Iona with the greatest respect; and, employing no means but those afforded him by the delightful suavity of his disposition, the soft and persevering influence of his conversation, and, above all, the example of a life so perfectly conformed to his doctrine, he triumphed over the inveterate dislike of the sons of St. Columba for that innovation which was to reunite them to the rest of Christendom. It is not probable that he succeeded at once, since he lived for the thirteen last years of his life at Iona, in the long famous island which he hoped to crown with a new glory by bringing it back into the orbit of Catholic unity. But his victory was complete and final. He died at the age of ninety on Easter-day, the regular celebration of which had preoccupied, excited, and agitated so many saints before him. It fell, in the year of his death, on the 24th April—that is to say, on

a day when it had never been and never could be observed, according to the computation followed by the Irish. After having commenced, along with his brethren whom he had the joy to lead back to Catholic unity, to celebrate on earth the greatest solemnity of the liturgical year, he went to complete it in heaven with our Lord, the holy Apostles, and all the citizens of the celestial country, where the eternal celebration ceases no more.[1]

All the monasteries subordinate to Iona followed the example of their metropolitan community in the adoption of the Roman Easter and the orthodox tonsure. There is ground for believing that they accepted at the same time the Benedictine rule, since none of the numerous monks and missionaries sent forth by them into France, and specially into Germany, carried any other rules with them than those of the order of St. Benedict.[2]

Ireland thus found itself entirely brought under the laws of Roman discipline. It was by her action, and in her southern provinces, that the first movement of return to unity[3]—a movement carried out by Adamnan with, except in Iona and its dependencies, universal success—had been begun by the Council of 634. The country most distant and least accessible to Roman influence, withdrawn behind Wales and the sea, which made a double rampart for her, was thus the first conquest of the principle of unity.[4] Caledonia, the modern Scotland, represented by the Picts, the farthest north and most untamable of all the populations of the British Isles, soon followed. And, finally, Iona

[1] "Doctor suavissimus . . . libenter auditus ab universis, immutavit piis ac sedulis exhortationibus inveteratam illam traditionem parentum eorum. . . . In insula quam ipse velut nova quadam relucente gratia ecclesiasticæ societatis et pacis Christi consecraverat . . . gaudium summæ festivitatis quod cum fratribus quos ad unitatis gratiam converterat, inchoavit, cum Domino et apostolis cæterisque cœli civibus complevit, immo idipsum celebrare sine fine non desinit."—BEDE, v. 22.

[2] MABILLON, in *Præfat. III. Sec. Bened.*, No. 16.

[3] See vol. iii. p. 388.

[4] VARIN, Memoir already quoted.

herself yielded, increasing, by all the numerous family of Columb-kill, the crowded ranks of faithful and obedient children in the Roman Church.[1]

The Britons of Cambria alone resisted; they, the nearest of all, exposed every day to the example, efforts, and persuasions of the orthodox, alone persisted in the customs which they had refused to sacrifice to Augustin. Bede, the illustrious contemporary of those last struggles, grows indignant over this insurmountable obstinacy. He contrasts it with the docility of the Irish and Scotch, and attempts to explain the causes of the difference.[2] "The Scottish nation," he says, "communicated frankly and generously to the Anglo-Saxons by the ministrations of Aïdan and other missionaries, the truth as far as she knew it; in return, she owes to the Anglo-Saxons the perfect order and regularity which were wanting to her. But the Britons, who had never wished to reveal the Christian religion to the Anglo-Saxons, bury themselves deeper and deeper in their error, now that the English are initiated into all the verities of the Catholic faith. They hold high their tonsured heads, but not in the form of a crown; and they profess to celebrate the Christian solemnities while separating themselves from the Church of Christ."[3]

A little reflection ought to have been sufficient to con-

[1] It must be acknowledged that from this moment the influence of this celebrated sanctuary went on diminishing, though it still remained much beyond that of the rest of the Celtic Church.

[2] He admits, however, that in the time of Adamnan the example of Ireland was contagious for a certain number of Britons, v. 17: "Plurima pars Scottorum in Hibernia, *et nonnulla etiam de Britonibus in Britannia*, ecclesiasticum paschalis observantiæ tempus suscepit." The Britons of Cumberland and of Strathclyde, who were more directly under the influence and authority of Northumbrian kings and pontiffs, are probably referred to in this passage.

[3] "Ipsi adhuc inveterati et claudicantes in semitis suis, et capita sine corona prætendunt et solemnia Christi sine Ecclesiæ Christi societate venerantur."—BEDE, v. 22.

vince the honest Bede that some other motive than prejudice or religious passion had to do with the infatuated resistance of the Britons; it was the patriotic sentiment which the Anglo-Saxons had mortally wounded, and which Bede himself, like a true Englishman, does not seem to have been able to comprehend as existing in the victims of Saxon invasion. The Anglo-Saxons had never attacked Ireland before the passing incursion of Egfrid. They fought only by intervals, or held themselves upon the defensive against the Picts and Scots of Scotland; while against the Britons war and conflict were perpetual. This war dated from the first landing of the Saxons. It had begun long before the mission of Augustin, and had lasted for three centuries when Bede wrote.[1] It was not then the doctrines or usages of Rome, it was the ecclesiastical supremacy and moral invasion of the Saxons, which the remnant of the British nation, withdrawn within its inaccessible stronghold of Cambria, repelled with the energy of desperation. For a century and a half, up to the moment of Augustin's arrival, religion and patriotism had borne an equal part in their horror for the pagan barbarians who had come first to waste, and then to take possession of their native island. They had seen, with equal distrust and repugnance, these savage invaders, whose eternal damnation seemed to them a sort of consolatory justice, gradually introduced into the fold of the Church. By maintaining their ancient customs, by celebrating Easter at a different date, by seeing on the shaven brows of their clergy the distinctive sign of their independent origin and tradition, they testified their incredulity of the Christianity of their enemies, and raised a supreme protest in favour of their own vanquished but not extirpated nationality before God and man.[2]

[1] VARIN, Memoir already quoted.

[2] This is called by Bede, in language too like that which Muscovite writers of our own day employ in respect to the Poles, *a domestic and*

While Wilfrid consumed his life in the north of England in a struggle against the enmities which probably fomented and aggravated the opposition of the Celts to his innovations, a celebrated monk named Aldhelm, about his own age, and who died in the same year, distinguished himself by his efforts to lead back the Britons who were subjects of the kingdom of Wessex, or lived on its borders, to Roman unity, as well as to extend and consolidate the Christian faith among the Western Saxons. His fame was too great in the middle ages, and he has been too often quoted in our own day among the pioneers of literature, to be passed over by us without remark.[1] He was descended from that powerful race of Cerdic which traced its genealogy up to the god Woden or Odin,[2] and which reigned

immoral hatred: "Britones maxima ex parte domestico sibi odio gentem Anglorum et totius Ecclesiæ catholicæ statum Pascha, minus recte *moribusque improbis* pugnant." There is no just reason for imputing to the British Christians a lower rate of morals than those of the Saxon converts; but our venerable historian, blinded by his passions and prejudices, goes still further, and yields, as so many have done after him, to the hateful temptation of identifying the work of God with a human conquest: "Tamen et divina sibi et humana prorsus resistente virtute, in neutro cupitum possunt obtinere propositum: quippe qui quamvis ex parte sui sunt juris, nonnulla tamen ex parte Anglorum sunt servitio mancipati."—v. 23. He says elsewhere (v. 18) that St. Aldhelm wrote: "Librum egregium adversus errorem Britonum, quo vel Pascha non suo tempore celebrant, vel alia *perplura ecclesiasticæ castitati et paci* contraria gerunt." In all Aldhelm's writings that have been preserved to us there is not the least allusion to the irregular morals of the Celtic clergy.

[1] Except certain lines in Bede (v. 18), and the biographical details which have been found in Aldhelm's works, we have no contemporary information as to his life. But William of Malmesbury, in the twelfth century, and before him another monk, Faricius, a member of the great monastery of which Aldhelm had been abbot, compiled two separate biographies of the saint, from the traditions of their community. The work of William, which is very curious, has been published by Mabillon and the Bollandists in an abridged form, which was all they themselves knew of it. The complete text is to be found only in the *Anglia Sacra* of Wharton, vol. ii. The literary position of Aldhelm has been ably examined by Lingard (*Anglo-Saxon Church*, vol. ii.) and Ozanam (*Etudes Germaniques*, vol. ii. 489).

[2] *Chron. Saxon.*, ad. ann. 552.

over the Saxons of the West until the moment came when it united all the kingdoms of the Heptarchy under its dominion. Aldhelm, who had been devoted from his youth to religious and literary studies, was soon attracted by a school which had just risen in his native kingdom, and of which he was destined to become the principal glory. A Scottish monk named Maïdulf, moved by the same impulse which led so many Anglo-Saxons to the cloisters and hermitages of Ireland, had come to England to seek a solitude where he could pray and study in peace. He established himself in an immense forest upon the borders of Wessex and Mercia, and lived there as a hermit, sheltered by a hut which he had been allowed to build under the walls of an old castle, a place which had come into the possession of the Saxon kings after having been the dwelling of British chiefs, and was the sole remnant of a British town which the Teutonic conquerors had destroyed.[1] The Celtic solitary, to provide himself with the means of living, opened a school. Any man in our day, in any country in the world except the Far West of America, who should open a school in a wood, would run great risk of dying there of hunger. But at that time such a thirst for instruction had arisen among the Anglo-Saxons, and the fountains at which they could satisfy it were so rare, that the speculation of Maïdulf succeeded perfectly. Scholars came to him in sufficient numbers to enable him shortly to form a community, and among the rest came Aldhelm, first as a pupil and afterwards as a monk.[2] He remained there for fifteen years, was elected abbot on the death of Maïdulf, and by his exertions the foundation of the Celtic anchorite became one of the principal monasteries

[1] *Liber Antiquitatum Meldunensis Cœnobii*, ap. DUGDALE, *Monasticon*. The remembrance of this catastrophe appears to survive in the modern name of *Broken-borough*, not far from Malmesbury.

[2] "Deficientibus necessariis scholares in discipulatum accepit ut eorum liberalitate victus tenuitatem corrigeret. Illi procedenti tempore magistri sequaces ex scholaribus monachi effecti, in conventum non exiguum coaluere."—GUILL. MALMESB., *Vita Aldhelmi*, ap. WHARTON, p. 3.

in England, still, however, bearing the name of the old and saintly stranger whom the Celts were always proud to remember they had given as a master to the great Aldhelm.[1]

Before, however, he was called to rule his co-disciples, Aldhelm desired to have the advantage of other instructions than those of his Celtic master. He went repeatedly to Canterbury,[2] where the great monastic schools had taken new life under that Abbot Adrian whom we have already so often referred to, and who had come from Africa with the Asiatic Archbishop Theodore, to preside over the Catholic education of the Anglo-Saxons. This eminent man, described by a monastic historian four centuries after his death as the master of masters, the fountain-head and centre of letters and arts, gained the heart of Aldhelm by developing the fulness of his intelligence. The young West Saxon came out of the hands of his African preceptor furnished with all which then constituted a course of literary and religious instruction.[3] During his entire life he retained a grateful recollection of his teacher, and took pleasure in dating the true birth of his mind from his residence at Canterbury. "It is you, my beloved," he wrote to Adrian, "who have been the venerable teacher of my rude infancy, it is you whom I embrace with the effusion of a pure tenderness, longing much to return to you."[4]

It was thus at Canterbury that Aldhelm acquired that

[1] *Maildulf's burgh*, whence Malmesbury. "Abbas monasterii quod Maildufi urbem nuncupavit."—BEDE. v. 18. "A quodam sancto viro de nostro genere nutritus es."—*Epist. Scoti Anonym.*, ap. GILES, p. 98.

[2] It is difficult to conceive how William of Malmesbury could attribute the first training of Aldhelm to the Abbot Adrian. Aldhelm, who died a septuagenarian in 709, must have been at least twenty in 669, the year in which Adrian landed in England. Besides, it is proved that Aldhelm made two distinct visits to Canterbury.

[3] "Quem in arcem scientiæ stetisse qui Anglorum gesta perleget, intelliget. . . . Fons liberarum vivus artium."—GUILL. MALMESB., p. 3.

[4] "Reverendissimo patri meæque rudis infantiæ venerando præceptori. . . . Mi charissime, quem gratia puræ dilectionis amplector."—ALDHELMI, *Opera*, p. 330, ed. Giles.

profound knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, that love of Greek, Latin and Hebrew, these literary tastes and habits, which gained him the first place in the universal admiration of his countrymen. Not only contemporaries, such as Bede,[1] but their distant descendants, offered him a homage which has attracted the unaccustomed attention of several modern writers. I am aware that he is the first Saxon whose writings have been preserved,[2] the first man of Teutonic race who cultivated the Latin muse, as he boasts in applying to himself while still very young these lines of Virgil:—

> "Primus ego in patriam mecum, modo vita supersit,
> Aonio rediens deducam vertice Musas.
> Primus Idumæas referam tibi, Mantua, palmas."

But I cannot but think that his literary importance has been singularly exaggerated. Of all the Fathers of the Church, or even of ecclesiastical writers generally, I know none whose productions are more wearisome. He has neither the fiery originality of Ceadmon nor the eloquent and elegant simplicity of Bede. He is certainly well-informed for his time, and is not without a certain warmth of feeling when his mind is not frozen by pedantic formalism. Sometimes he applies happily texts from the Bible, and in his famous essays in prose and verse upon virgins and virginity he shows himself thoroughly instructed in sacred and ecclesiastical history. His verses, rhymed and unrhymed, are a little better than his prose, but still are destitute of any special charm or brilliancy, notwithstanding the pompous affectation of his images and metaphors. But in verse and in prose, this Teuton, in whom it would be pleasant to find something wild and primitive, delights in literary sleight-of-hand, in

[1] "Vir undecumque doctissimus: nam et sermone nitidus, et scripturarum tam liberalium quam ecclesiasticarum erat eruditione mirandus."—BEDE, v. 18.

[2] "Constat neminem nostræ stirpis prosapia genitum, et Germanicæ gentis cunabulis confotum, in hujuscemodi negocio ante nostram mediocritatem tantopere desudasse."—*Epist. ad Acircium*, ed. Giles, p. 327.

acrostics, in enigmas, in alliterations, in a play upon words, and a childish and grotesque redundance of expression[1]—in short, in all the paltry refinements of the Greek and Latin decadence.

We should judge him no doubt more leniently if we were acquainted with his Anglo-Saxon works, which must have contributed largely to his popular reputation. But of these there remains to us only a vague recollection, associated with the most curious and touching feature of his youth. What would not one give to have the actual text of those canticles and ballads which he sang upon the bridges and at the wayside corners, lying in wait for the Saxon peasants who left church in haste as soon as mass was over to avoid the sermon? Appearing before them as a musician, one of their ordinary bards, he attempted no doubt to teach them, under that popular and fascinating form of utterance, the same truths of religion which it wearied them to hear from the pulpit.[2] These songs in the vernacular tongue retained their popularity for several centuries, and gained for Aldhelm the honour of being proclaimed prince of Anglo-Saxon poetry by the great King Alfred.

The most striking particular in the history and writings of Aldhelm is the view they afford us of the literary and intellectual life, developed as it were in a moment, in the Saxon cloisters, almost before their completion, by an inspiring breath, at once Catholic and classic, from Italy

[1] I refer those who may think me too severe, and who may not have at hand the convenient volume published by Dr. Giles, to the extracts from St. Aldhelm given by Lingard and Ozanam.

[2] "Litteris ad plenum instructus, nativæ quoque linguæ non negligebat carmina, adeo ut, teste libro Ælfredi . . . nulla unquam ætate par fuerit quisquam, poesim Anglicam posse facere vel canere. . . . Carmen triviale quod adhuc vulgo cantitatur fecisse. . . . Populum eo tempore semi-barbarum, parum divinis sermonibus intentum statim cantatis missis domos cursitare solitum; ideo sanctum virum super pontem qui rura et urbem continuat, abeuntibus se opposuisse obicem, quasi artem canendi professum. . . . Hoc commento sensim inter ludicra verbis scripturarum insertis, cives ad sanitatem reduxisse."—GUILL. MALMESB., p. 4.

and the East. The same phenomenon had been apparent two centuries earlier in the Irish monasteries under an inspiration more original but less easy to study. This literary life had its clouds and its pettinesses, its pretentious and affected aspect. But such a blossoming of human thought, of study and knowledge, of poetry and eloquence, in the bosom of a barbarous and warlike race, still apparently absorbed by war, invasions, dynastic and domestic revolutions, and all the storms and blunders which characterise the childhood of society, is not the less a great and wonderful sight.

The good and evil sides of this development could not be better manifested than in the person of St. Aldhelm, and especially in the extent and variety of his information. He was an excellent musician, and studied eagerly all the instruments known in his day.[1] What was still more rare, he had studied Roman law,[2] happily ignored by all the other Anglo-Saxon monks and men of letters, even including the Venerable Bede, whose learning seemed universal. He was acquainted, as has been seen, with the three sacred languages, and knew enough of Hebrew to read the Bible in the original. He not only read Greek, but spoke and pronounced it like an ancient Greek, according to the two professors whom King Ina, cousin of Aldhelm, brought from Greece to aid him in his studies. As for Latin, it occupied him only too much. He makes wearisome dissertations upon the minute details of grammar, prosody, and metrical rules, and quotes to extremity Virgil and Lucan, Persius and Terence, Horace and Juvenal; he even quotes Juvencus and the Priapeia!

[1] "Omnia instrumenta quæ fidibus vel fistulis aut aliis varietatibus melodiæ fieri possunt . . . in quotidiano usu habuit."—FARICIUS, *Vita Aldhelm.*, ap. BOLLAND., t. vi. Maii, p. 83.

[2] He himself states this in a letter to his predecessor Hedda, ed. Giles, p. 96. Compare LAPPENBERG, i. 196. I do not know how Palgrave discovered the existence somewhere of a manuscript treatise of Aldhelm upon Roman law, which, in 1832, he hoped soon to publish.

At the same time, his literary or classical occupations never made him lose sight of the exigencies or perils of the soul. In a letter which has been often quoted, he warns one of his countrymen who was going to study in Ireland against the dangers of pagan philosophy, and, above all, of mythology. "What fruit," he asks, "can orthodox truth derive from the studies of a man who spends his strength in examining into the incests of the impure Proserpine, the adventures of the petulant Hermione, the bacchanals of Lupercus, or the parasites of Priapus? All that has vanished; it has become as nothing before the Cross, victorious over death."[1]

This anxiety for the salvation of souls, which he gives as the motive of all his works, reveals itself especially in his correspondence. For example, here are certain expressions in a letter which might have been addressed yesterday to the youth, half clerical, half noble, of the Universities of Oxford or Cambridge—so unchanging is the Anglo-Saxon nature in its vices as in its virtues: "Dear Ethelwald, who are at once my son and my disciple, you are still very young; but, I entreat you, do not let yourself be too much in bondage to the vain pleasures of this world. Avoid carefully daily excesses in drinking, long and endless repasts, even riding-parties too much prolonged, and every other miserable sensual delight.[2] I implore you also not to let yourself be overcome by the love of money or of vain-glory, or by that secular boasting which is odious to God. Consecrate rather your time, my beloved, to the study of the

[1] "Quidnam, rogitum quæso, orthodoxæ fidei sacramento commodi affert circa temeratum spurcæ Proserpinæ incestum . . . enucleate legendo scrutendoque sordescere . . . quæ . . . alma mortis morte stipite patibuli affixa, solo tenus diruta evanuere."—*Epist. ad Wilfrid.*, ed. Giles, p. 337.

[2] "Sive in quotidianis potationibus et conviviis usu frequentiore ac prolixiore inhoneste superfluis, sive in equitandi vagatione culpabili. . . . Seu in quibuslibet corporeæ delectationis voluptatibus execrandis. . . . Multo magis, mi amantissime, vel lectionibus divinis, vel orationibus sacris semper invigila."—P. 332, ed Giles.

Scriptures and to prayer; and if you wish, in addition, to study secular literature, do it with the special intention of understanding better the sacred text, the meaning of which depends almost everywhere on the understanding of the rules of grammar. Put this letter among your other books, that you may read it over and over again."

In dedicating his voluminous treatise on Latin versification, after twenty years' absence, to the chief[1] of a Northumbrian or Scottish tribe who had been his companion in his studies, and had become his spiritual son, he insists warmly that the poor prince, whom he calls his "very reverend son," should consider it a duty to read the wearisome volume from beginning to end. He expatiates at length upon the trouble which his production had cost him in the midst of his pastoral cares, and the convulsions of the age. "It would be absurd," he says, "if you did not take the trouble to eat what I have taken so much pains to grind and make into bread."[2] Then he invokes the example of the great Emperor Theodosius, who, while ruling the world, found time to copy the eighteen books of the grammarian Priscian. But he adds: "Let not the sound of the trumpet of the last judgment depart from your ears; let it recall to you day and night the book of the law, which ought to be meditated day and night. You will never sin if you think always of your last end. What is our prosperity here below? a dream, a vapour, the foam on the sea. God grant that the possession of present good may not hold to us the place of future recompense, and that the abundance of that which perishes may not be followed by the dearth of that

[1] It is not known who this Acircius was, whom he describes pompously as "Aquilonalis imperii sceptra gubernanti," but whom he reminds that they contracted in their youth "inextricabile conglutinati fœderis pignus."

[2] "Absurdum nempe arbitror si . . . illud te pigeat velut insolescentem ac delicatum paulatim masticare ac ruminare, quod me non piguit, utpote pistoris pinsentis officio functum, commolere et tollere."—P. 328, ed Giles.

which endures. I ask this for you and for myself, from Him who for us has hung upon the cross."[1]

The rare fragments of his correspondence are at the same time the only evidence by which the heart of Aldhelm can be estimated; and his heart seems to us to have been much superior to his intelligence. A tenderness and kindness are here visible, which, in the person of a monk of barbarous race, are much more touching and attractive than all his rhetoric and learning. We perceive with pleasure that his soul was neither inflated nor disturbed by his great and increasing reputation, nor by the crowd of disciples and admirers who came to him, not only from the Britannic Isles, but also from Greece and Spain. He continued always the same mild and affectionate spirit which, while passionately studying prosody, astronomy, and Roman law, at Canterbury, wrote to his bishop lamenting that he could not celebrate Christmas in the joyous company of his brethren of Malmesbury, and charging him to salute tenderly in his name all the brethren, from the first to the last.[2]

These features of his character explain the great popularity which he enjoyed in his own country. It was such that when he returned from his journeys, he was met not only by a long procession of monks with chants and incense, but also by a crowd of laymen, who formed themselves into a kind of rhythmic dance in his honour.[3]

After this prolonged discussion of the literary position held by Aldhelm, it is necessary to recall to our readers that the great point of interest for us is his monastic life, and his connection with the Celtic dissidents.

[1] "Propterea cœlestis tubæ clangor. . . . Utinam caducarum copia, secutarum non sit inopia . . . quod præstare dignetur, qui pro nobis in patibulo pependit."—*Epist. ad Wilfrid.*, ed Giles, p. 328.

[2] "Fateor me decrevisse. . . . Natalis Domini solemnitatem in consortio fratrum tripudians celebrare. . . . Salutate in Christo omnem sodalium meorum catervam a minimo usque ad maximum."

[3] "Venienti occursum est ubique magna pompa, longo apparatu salutantium. . . . Laicorum pars pedibus plaudunt choreas; pars diversis corporum gestibus internas pandunt lætitias."—GUILL. MALMESB., p. 19.

This indifferent writer was a great monk. He divided his life between study and prayer, but study was for him only a succession of conversations with God. "When I read," he said, "it is God who speaks to me; when I pray, it is to God that I speak."[1] Like his contemporaries, Wilfrid and the holy abbots of the Northumbrian coast, he professed and extended the rule of St. Benedict, whose praises he has written in his poem in honour of Virgins, and whom he does not hesitate to regard as the first author of the conversion of England, his disciples having been its earliest missionaries.[2] He thus substituted the teachings and traditions of Canterbury for the influence of his first Celtic master. This, however, was not prompted by self-indulgence, for he continued, as did Wilfrid himself, faithful to the great austerities which characterised Irish monastic life. Aldhelm imposed upon himself the same extraordinary penances as were habitual to the Celtic monks. To subdue the impulses of the flesh he would plunge during the night into a fountain near the monastery, and there remain immersed to the neck, till he had said the Psalter, and this in

[1] "Lectionibus frequenter, orationibus instanter incumbebat, ut sicut ipse in quadam epistola dicebat, legens Deum alloquentem audiret, orans Deum alloqueretur."—GUILL. MALMESB., p. 13.

[2] We quote the lines for the satisfaction of our readers. They contain the first homage ever offered by a Teutonic pen to St. Benedict and his institution:—

"Temporibus faustus Benedictus claruit isdem,
Quem Deus Ausoniæ clemens indulserat auctor. . . .
Primo qui statuit nostræ certamina vitæ,
Qualiter optatam teneant cœnobia normam,
Quoque modo properet directo tramite sanctus,
Ad supera scandens cœlorum culmina cultor;
Cujus præclaram pandens ab origine vitam
Grægorius præsul chartis descripserat olim,
Donec æthralem felix migraret in arcem.
Hujus alumnorum numero glomeramus ovantes,
Quos gerit in gremio fœcunda Britannia cives,
A quo jam nobis baptismi gratia fluxit,
Atque magistrorum veneranda caterva cucurrit."

De Laudibus Virginum, p. 159.

winter as in summer. The fountain long retained his name, and the memory of his wonderful austerities.[1] I suppose he is the sole poet, the sole philosopher, of whom such recollections have been preserved.

But he was far from concentrating his zeal within the narrow enclosure of his monastery. It was he who, by his preaching, completed the conquest of Wessex, the kingdom which, a hundred years after his death, was to absorb the other seven kingdoms of the Heptarchy. This work was long and laborious. The people seem to have been Christian only in name: they neither listened to the priests nor attended the churches. Aldhelm employed all the resources of his eloquence to attract them. He even went to the fairs and market-places, mingled with the groups of buyers and sellers, and succeeded, by his persuasive addresses, in making them leave their merchandise for the moment, and follow him to the church, where he fed them with the bread of the divine Word.[2]

His anxiety for the good of souls and the honour of the Church extended even beyond his native province. He was not indifferent, as were so many other holy bishops and abbots of his time, to the noble struggles of Wilfrid. One of his letters still exists, addressed to the numerous members of Wilfrid's clergy who had abandoned their pontiff in the midst of his trials, and who, during his exile, sought the favour of his persecutors. "I entreat you on my knees," wrote Aldhelm, "not to allow yourselves to be disturbed by the hurricane which has just shaken the foundations of

[1] "Ut vim rebelli corpori conscinderet, fonti se humero tenus immergebat. Ibi nec glacialem in hyeme frigorem, nec æstate nebulas ex locis palustribus halantes, curans. . . . Fons ille . . . in valle cœnobii lenibus scatebris fluens."—GUILL. MALMESB., p. 13.

[2] "Illius provinciæ populus, perversus opere, quamvis subditus fidei nostræ, ecclesiam non frequentabat, nec sacerdotum curabat imperium: quem vir blandus verbis monens suavibus. . . . Mercatorum ex diversis patribus multitudo congregabatur maxima: cui pater iste extra urbem veniebat obviando. . . . Quidam eorem . . . pro quibus venerant relinquentes ad tempus mercimonia . . . post hæc . . . repedabant ad propria, animabus suis divino prius officio saginatis."—BOLLAND., t. vi. Maii. p. 85.

your Church, the sound of which has echoed even to us. If it is needful, take courage to leave the country of your fathers with your bishop, and follow him into exile. What pain, what labour should ever be allowed to separate you from him who has fed you, trained you, carried you in his arms and on his breast, with so tender a charity? . . . Look at the men of the world, who are strangers to all knowledge of divine things. What would be said of laymen who, after having loved and served their lord in his prosperity, should abandon him when he fell into misfortune and poverty? What would be said of those who should prefer the repose of their own hearths, instead of joining themselves to the misery and exile of their prince? By what a universal explosion of laughter, of contempt, and execration, would not they be overwhelmed? And you too, you priests, what will not be said of you if you allow the bishop who ordained you to go alone into banishment?"[1] We are not informed what was the effect of this letter; but it is not the less curious to behold our Anglo-Saxon abbot, worthy descendant of Odin, invoking to the aid of episcopal authority, and endeavouring to awake in the breasts of his priestly brethren, that tradition of personal devotion, that passionate sentiment of fealty to prince and lord, of which the Anglo-Saxons have left us so many touching examples.

Aldhelm was the true founder of Malmesbury, of which he was abbot for thirty years. It was to him it owed the powerful and popular existence which lasted till an advanced period in the middle ages; and he attracted to it an immense crowd of monks and students.[2] By the grandeur

[1] "Vos viscerales contribulos, flexis genuum poplitibus, subnixa exposco prece. . . . Ecce seculares divinæ scientiæ extorres, si devotum dominum quem in prosperitate dilexerunt . . . deseruerint. . . . Nonne execrabiles cachinni ridiculo et gannaturæ strepitu ab omnibus ducuntur? Quid ergo de vobis dicetur?" &c.—*Epistola ad Clerum Wilfridi Episcopi*, p. 335.

[2] "Currebatur ad Aldhelmum totis semitis: his vitæ sanctimoniam, illis litterarum scientiam desiderantibus. . . . Tunc res monasterii in immensum augeri."—GUILL. MALMESB., p. 10.

and variety of his buildings, he made it the most magnificent edifice which then existed in England. The sympathy which existed between him and the kings and nobles of Wessex and Mercia procured vast territorial gifts to the monastery situated on the borders of the two kingdoms. The abbatial demesne, which contained only thirty dairies [1] when he became abbot, included more than four hundred at his death. In order to protect the liberty and property of the community as much as possible from lay or ecclesiastical cupidity, he went to Rome, with the consent of the kings of Mercia and Wessex, and obtained from Pope Sergius I. an act of privilege which placed the monastery of Malmesbury and its dependencies under the special protection of the Holy See, and guaranteed to them an absolute independence of all secular or episcopal authority.[2] When he became a bishop, Aldhelm took pains to have this exemption confirmed, with all requisite solemnity, by his cousin King Ina.

For he too became a bishop towards the end of his life, and in spite of all his efforts to be delivered from this burden. On the death of the bishop of the West Saxons, Hedda, the plan of Archbishop Theodore was brought into operation to divide his vast diocese into two. A new bishopric was created at Sherburne, which still, however, was of much too vast extent, since it included almost all the south-west of England

[1] I translate thus the *cassatos* of William, which I suppose to be equivalent to the more usual term *casata*.

[2] The authenticity of the Act given by William has been contested, but the fact of the exemption does not seem doubtful. On this subject the Bollandists say, "Tales exemptiones (from episcopal jurisdiction), licet eo tempore rariores, non omnino inusitatas fuisse ostendit eruditissimus Mabilio, *de Re diplomatica*, l. i. c. 3, ex quibus corrigas quæ alibi forte in contrarium diximus." Our readers will not wish us to enter into the coarse fables, little to the honour of the Papacy, which the biographers of Aldhelm have mingled with the narrative of his journey to Rome, nor to the extraordinary trial which the holy author of the *Eulogy of Virginity*, like Robert d'Arbrissel at a later period, imposed upon himself to prove his victory over his senses. "Quomodo," says Henschenius, with reason, "monacho id credam fuisse permissum?" And it is well to add, as Malmesbury says on another occasion, "Non enim eget Aldhelmus ut mendaciis asseratur."

to the point of Cornwall, which the West Saxons had not yet completely conquered.[1] Aldhelm was called to this new diocese. After his promotion it was his desire that the monks of his different communities[2]—or, as he said, his families—should proceed, in all freedom, to the election of a new abbot; but they obstinately refused to give him a successor. To his reiterated requests they answered, "As long as you live, we will live with you and under you. But one thing we ask of you unanimously. It is, to guarantee to us, by the Holy Scriptures and the consent of the powerful, that after your death neither king, nor bishop, nor any man whatsoever, ecclesiastic or layman, may exercise over us an authority which we are not willing to accept."[3] Aldhelm procured an acknowledgment of the perpetual freedom of the monastery, which he continued to rule, from his cousin King Ina, from his colleague the Bishop of Winchester, and from all the clergy of Wessex assembled in synod. He then went to Canterbury to be consecrated by the former companion of his studies, the Archbishop Brithwald, successor of the great Theodore.

A curious incident is associated with this journey. When Aldhelm was at Canterbury he learned that ships from France, from the land of the Morins, had touched at Dover. On receiving this news he went to Dover, hoping to find among their cargoes books or other articles of use

[1] The seat of the ancient diocese continued at Winchester. That of Sherburne was shortly afterwards transferred to Sarum or Salisbury. It comprehended the six existing counties of Wilts, Berks, Somerset, Dorset, Devonshire, and Cornwall. It was afterwards subdivided, and the two additional dioceses of Bath and Exeter taken from it.

[2] There were three of these—Malmesbury, Frome, and Bradford, the two latter having sprung from the former.

[3] "Abbatem quem sibi spontanea voce familiarum mearum optio, consona voce elegisset. . . . Ut nullus post obitum tuum nec regalis audacitas, nec pontificalis auctoritas, vel aliquid ecclesiasticæ seu secularis dignitatis vir, sine nostro voluntatis arbitrio, in nobis sibi vindicet principatum."—*Epist. Aldhelmi de Libertate Propriæ Electionis*, ap. GUILL. MALMESB., BOLLAND., and GILES, p. 350.

to his church. And, in fact, he did discover among the merchandise displayed upon the shore many books, and one in particular, of which, after having carefully examined it, he asked the price. The sailors, seeing him so poorly clad, laughed at him, and pushed him roughly away. Soon after a storm broke out, endangering the anchored ship. Aldhelm threw himself into a boat (like the generous sailors in the lifeboats at the present day), to aid the crew of the threatened vessel. At his prayer the waves calmed down, and their lives were saved; the sailors, confused and deeply touched, then gave him the book he desired. It was a complete Bible, the Old and New Testaments, which he carried with him as a precious treasure to Malmesbury.[1] This anecdote is not without interest in connection with the history of material and intellectual commerce in England; it shows, too, that so far from interdicting the study of the Bible, as the modern English so blindly accuse her of doing, the Church, from the most primitive times, has neglected no occasion of spreading the knowledge of it.

The episcopate of Aldhelm lasted only four years, which he passed in continual journeys through his vast diocese, preaching day and night. He died in the same year as his master, the famous African abbot, Adrian of Canterbury, and his illustrious contemporary, Wilfrid of York. Death surprised him, as it did the holy apostle of Northumberland,[2] in a village,[3] during one of his apostolic journeys.

[1] "Spatiabatur sanctus juxta mare, intentosque oculos mercimoniis infigebat, si quid forte commodum ecclesiastico usui attulissent nautæ qui e Gallico sinu in Angliam provecti librorum copiam apportassent. Conspicatus librum totius Testamenti Veteris et Novi seriem continentem. . . . Cum gnarus folia volveret, pretium effringeret, barbari eum nautica lascivia conviciis aggrediuntur. . . . Mox ipse in scapha ascensa virtute remigum periclitantes adisset, mutata in bonum."—GUILL. MALMESB., p. 20. Cf. BOLLAND., *loc. cit.*, p. 8. This Bible was still in existence at Malmesbury in the time of the historian—more than four centuries after the death of Aldhelm.

[2] See vol. iii. p. 310.

[3] At Dulting in Somersetshire. "In prædicationibus noctes perinde ac

According to his own desire, he drew his last breath in the little wooden church to which he had come to preach the word of God; the stone on which he laid his dying head was shown long afterwards.

Such was the man to whom all agree in attributing the principal part in putting down what has been called the schism in the west and south of Great Britain. It is interesting to search out in his writings, as in his life, all the traces of his connection with the Celts. They are, however, few in number, and seem all connected either with his first education under the Celtic Maïdulf, or his consequent literary studies. He receives pompous compliments from several Irishmen, one of whom requests from him the loan of a book, and afterwards that he would receive him as a disciple, sending him a specimen of Latin verses, and announcing that he could easily find horses and a servant for the journey if Aldhelm's answer was favourable.[1] Another, exiled, as he describes it, in the most distant corner of the Frankish kingdom, beside the tomb of his holy countryman Fursy (at Lagny-sur-Marne), begs him, whom be calls the Archimandrite of the Saxons, to send him his Latin panegyrics.[2] At another time, it is the son of a Scottish king,

dies continuans, diœceses non segniter circumiens. . . . Lignea erat ecclesia, in qua se ultimum spirans affere jussit."—GUILL. MALMESB., p. 23. Eight centuries after his death his feast was still celebrated at Malmesbury by such a crowd of worshippers that, according to Camden, the presence of a troop of soldiers, *cohors militum*, was necessary to prevent disorder. Then came the Reformation of Henry VIII., with its usual train of devastations. The magnificent church of Malmesbury would have been razed to the ground had not a weaver bought it from the king to establish his looms there. The monastery was sacked. The precious MSS. of his library were long employed to fill up broken windows in the neighbouring houses, or to light the bakers' fires.—MAITLAND'S *Dark Ages*, p. 281.

[1] "Domino sancto, sapientissimo, Christo quidem carissimo Aldhelmo Scotus ignoti nominis in Deo æterno salutem," &c.—P. 98, ed. Giles.

[2] "Domino lectricibus ditato studiis mellifluisque ornato lucubratiunculis, Aldhelmo Archimandritæ Saxonum. . . . Cellanus in Hibernensi insula natus, in extremo Francorum limitis latens angulo exul." Aldhelm

learned in the literature of his time, who sends all his works to Aldhelm, in order that the file of so accomplished a genius may rub off the Scottish rust from them.[1] Then we find him, in his own person, congratulating one of his Anglo-Saxon friends on his return from foggy Ireland, after having studied there for six years. On this occasion he gives us an emphatic picture of the constant journeys of English students, who filled whole fleets going and coming to Ireland, in order to examine deeply, not only into the secrets of grammar, geometry, and physical science, but also into all the different interpretations of Scripture, "as if," he says, "there was a failure of Greek and Latin masters in green and fertile England to explain the obscurities of the celestial library to all who desire to know them." Then he instances his dear master Adrian, of ineffable urbanity, and the metropolitan Theodore, whom he represents surrounded by a troop of Irish disciples, like a wild boar surrounded by a crowd of furious dogs, holding them back, as by strokes of his tusks, by the nervous vigour of his dialectics, and the close ranks of his syllogisms.[2]

In all this there is no allusion to the religious differences which separated the Celts from the Anglo-Saxons, an omission which is of itself a new proof of the reconciliation already effected between the Irish Celts and the Anglo-

answers: "Miror quod me tantillum homunculum de famoso et florigero Francorum rure vestræ fraternitatis industria interpellat Saxonicæ prolis prosapia genitum."—P. 331, ed. Giles.

[1] "Arcivillum regis Scotiæ filium. . . . Ut perfecti ingenii lima eraderetur scabredo Scotica."—GUILL. MALMESB., p. 4.

[2] "Ex Hiberniæ brumosis insulæ climatibus. . . . Tam creber meatus est (istinc illiucque, istuc illucque) navigero æquoreas fretantium calle gurgites. . . . Cur Hibernia quo catervatim istinc lectores classibus advecti confluunt . . . ac si istic, fœcundo Britanniæ in cespite, didascali Argivi Romanive quirites minime reperiri queant. . . . Etiamsi Theodorus, Hibernensium globo discipulorum (seu aper truculentus Molossorum catasta ringente vallatus), stipetur; limato perniciter grammatico dente rebelles phalanges discutit," &c.—P. 92–94, ed. Giles; cf. OZANAM, *op. cit.*, 492. This letter must have been written before 690, the date of Theodore's death.

Saxon clergy, while the British Celts remained obstinate in their distinct and even hostile observances. Since the great victories of the Northumbrian kings it was specially the West Saxons who carried on the struggle against the Britons who had taken refuge in the mountainous peninsulas of Cambria and Cornwall, and whose unwearied resistance was no doubt seconded in an unforeseen and often dangerous way by the other Britons scattered through the districts already conquered by the Saxons. After one of these wars or insurrections, more cruel than usual, the national assembly of the West Saxons deliberated long over the measures it would be best to take by way of getting rid of one of the principal obstacles to the fusion of the two races, by leading back the vanquished Britons to unity in respect to paschal observances. The discussion lasted several days. At last, starting from the principle that no force must be employed, but solely reason and persuasion, it was resolved that Abbot Aldhelm, who was as blameless in life as in doctrine, should be charged to teach them the true laws of the Church, and to end the schism, for the honour of his country, as well as for the common salvation.[1] A national council (probably that of Becancelde), at which almost all the Anglo-Saxon clergy were represented, confirmed the mission which the abbot of Malmesbury had received from his countrymen. He accepted the task with his usual charity. Without adventuring his person in the midst of these refractory tribes, he addressed himself to their chiefs and clergy in writing. An unexpected success attended his efforts. Of all that he wrote on this subject there remains to us only one letter, addressed to a petty British king who still

[1] "Tunc rebellionem meditantes Kentuinus rex tam anxia cæde perdomuit, ut nihil ulterius sperarent. . . . Hinc frequenter West-Saxonum conventus, crebri cœtus coacti . . . sententia per plures dies multo verborum agmine volutata, nunc finem habuit : non vi cogendos schismaticos sed rationibus ducendos. . . . Ambitur precibus B. vir, ut hunc laborem impendat . . . patriæ laudi et cunctorum in commune saluti."—GUILL. MALMESB., p. 14. Cf. BOLLAND, *loc. cit.*, p. 87.

maintained his independence in Cornwall, at the extreme point of southern England. He draws in it a striking picture of the religious separation, of the moral repulsion, which still at the end of the seventh century rose like a wall between the two races—between the victors and the vanquished. "Beyond the mouth of the Severn," he says, "the priests of Cambria, proud of the purity of their morals, have such a horror of communication with us that they refuse to pray with us in the churches, or to seat themselves at the same table; more than this, what is left from our meals is thrown to dogs and swine, the dishes and bottles we have used have to be rubbed with sand, or purified by fire, before they will condescend to touch them. The Britons give us neither the salutation nor the kiss of peace; and if one of us went to live in their country, the natives would hold no communication with him till after he had been made to endure a penance of forty days."

Aldhelm then enlarges upon the cruel scandal of such struggles and hatreds in the Church of Christ. He discusses in succession the question of the tonsure and that of paschal observance. "We entreat you on our knees," he says, "in view of our future and common country in heaven, and of the angels, our future fellow-countrymen—we adjure you not to persevere in your arrogant contempt of the decrees of St. Peter, and the traditions of the Roman Church, by a proud and tyrannical attachment to the statutes of your ancestors. . . . Whatever may be the perfection of good works, they are unprofitable out of the Catholic church, alike to cenobites, however faithfully they may follow their rule, and to anchorites hidden in the wildest solitudes. To sum up everything in one word, it is vain for any man to take credit to himself for belonging to the Catholic faith so long as he rejects the doctrine and rule of St. Peter. For the foundation of the Church and the consolidation of the faith, placed first in Christ and secondly in St. Peter, wavers not before the assaults of any tempest. It is on

Peter that the Truth Himself conferred the privilege of the Church, saying, 'Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church.'"[1]

It is generally admitted that the zeal and eloquence of Aldhelm led back to orthodox rule a great many Britons, especially those who lived under the daily extending sway of the kings of Wessex.[2] But even the narratives most favourable to him make it apparent that all did not yield. The greater part of those who retained their independence beyond the Severn remained, according to all appearance, inaccessible to his efforts.

When at length they yielded, it was not to the preaching or influence of a stranger. The victory which neither the learned Saxon abbot nor the great Roman missionary could

[1] "Geruntio regi, simulque cunctis Dei sacerdotibus per Domnonia conversantibus. . . . Nuper cum enim in concilio episcoporum ex tota pene Britannia innumerabilis Dei sacerdotum caterva confluxit. . . . Demetarum sacerdotes de privata propriæ conversationis munditia gloriantes nostram communionem magnopere abominantur . . . reliquias epularum lurconum canum rictibus et immundis devorandos porcis projiciunt. Vascula quoque et phialas. . . . Propter communem cœlestis patriæ sortem et angelicæ sodalitatis collegium . . . flexis poplitibus . . . suppliciter effiagitamus ut . . . traditionem Ecclesiæ Romanæ propter prisca priorum statuta vestrorum nequaquam tyrannica freti pertinacia arroganter aspernemini. . . . Petro autem veritas ita privilegium sanxit Ecclesiæ."—P. 83–89, ed. Giles. Two words little used in the seventh century—*barones* and *katharos* —the first applied to military chiefs, the second to heretics who thought themselves purer than their neighbours—will be remarked in this curious letter.

[2] "Scripsit, jubente synodo suæ gentis, librum egregium adversus errorem Britonum . . . multosque eorum qui occidentalibus Saxonibus subditi erant Britones, ad catholicam Dominici Paschæ celebrationem hujus lectione perduxit."—BEDE, v. 18. It is difficult to believe with Mabillon that this *librum egregium* was nothing else than the letter to the king of Cornwall which has just been quoted. The monastic historians of Malmesbury attribute greater results to Aldhelm's work than does Bede. "Ad Dominicæ fidei regulam, et ipsos præsules et innumeram populi revocavit multitudinem."—BOLLAND., *loc. cit.*, p. 85. "Debent usque hodie correctionem suam Aldhelmo; quamvis pro insita nequitia et virum non agnoscant et volumen pessumdederint."—GUILL. MALMESB. ap. WHARTON, p. 15.

win, was the work of a native prelate. Elbod, Bishop of Bangor, a Briton by birth, succeeded, not without much resistance, in introducing the Roman computation, first in North Cambria, and afterward in the southern part of the province, towards the end of the eighth century.[1] From that date there is no longer any question of dissent between the two Churches. In everything belonging to worship and faith, the Cambrian Britons, while still defending their independence with jealous pride, were henceforward at one with the Anglo-Saxons.[2] Like them, they went in crowds to Rome, their kings at their head,[3] swelling the armies of pilgrims who mingled at the foot of the chair of Peter their aspirations, their enmities, their diversities of race, but who returned with the lawful assurance that the supreme advantage of catholic unity exacted no sacrifice of truly national independence, right, or tradition.

Thus the different centres of that Celtic dissidence which has been so unjustly called schism, were successively overcome; and thus finished, upon the ground of religion, though only to begin over again and perpetuate itself elsewhere, the long struggle between the Celts and the Saxons. According to the common fate of human conflicts and passions, all this tumult died away into silence and forgetfulness, as the

[1] "Anno DCCLXX. Pascha mutatur apud Britones, emendante Elbod, homine Dei."—*Ann. Eccl. Menevensis*, in *Anglia Sacra*, vol. ii. p. 648. Cf. AUGUSTIN THIERRY, *Histoire de la Conquête d'Angleterre*, t. i. p. 87.

[2] This has been perfectly demonstrated by F. Walter (*Das alte Wales*, p. 232), against the childishly absurd affirmations of Roberts, Gieseler, and even of Lappenberg. All that can be admitted is, that the Cambrian bishops, who had their own metropolitan see either at *Menevia* (St. David's) or at Llandaff, did not recognise the metropolitan rights conferred by St. Gregory upon Augustin. The question was definitely settled only by Innocent III., who placed the Cambrian bishops under the authority of Canterbury.

[3] Cadwallader is noted as one of the Welsh kings who met the Anglo-Saxon kings at Rome in the year 680, but the assertion rests upon a doubtful tradition, while the pilgrimages of Howell and Cyngus in the ninth century, like that of Howell the Good in the tenth, rest upon more satisfactory authority.

Rhine disappears obscurely in the sand and marshes of Holland after its majestic and sometimes stormy waters have swept through so many famous lands proud of, and blessed by, its presence.

In casting a last glance upon these prolonged contests, so insignificant at bottom, yet so seriously affecting national influences and interests, and animated by the passions, talents, and virtues of their principal champions,—the wisdom, I may even add, the grave beauty, of the language used by him who was the greatest monk of the greatest age, will be profoundly admired.

"This dispute regarding the date of a day," says our Mabillon, "occupied the Church for six centuries, and it required three of these centuries to restore union. Human nature takes back in this kind of controversy its downward inclination. The heat of warfare and the passion of success take possession of the soul under the cover of religion; and as they know no limits, it often happens that the laws of Christian charity are sacrificed to questions of purely human invention. In such cases no one is permitted to disobey the judgment of the Church; but it is important that the pastors of the Church should use their authority with so much moderation as not imprudently to provoke feeble spirits too much attached to their own opinions into revolt, thus producing the greatest evils from an insignificant cause."[1]

At the same time this generous son of St. Benedict congratulates himself with reason that the Benedictines had the honour of leading back to unity the Scots and Britons, so long separated for so small a matter from the Roman Church.

[1] "Sic unius diei quæstio Ecclesiam detinuit per annos fere sexcentos: et tria minimum sæcula vix fuerunt satis componendæ hominum rixosorum coronæ. . . . In his vero casibus, sicut ab Ecclesiæ catholicæ sententia recedere nemini licet; ita convenit Ecclesiæ pastores sic moderari auctoritatem suam, ut nec imbecilles animos, propriis sensibus nimirum addictos, incaute provocent ad secessionem, nec in levibus causis pariant grande malum."—MABILLON, *Præfatio in III. Secul. Benedict.*, No. 14, 15.

It must be recollected at the same time that, during all the seventh century, the Celtic or British Church was much more extensive than the British nation. The nation was concentrated in Cambria and in the neighbouring peninsulas; the Church embraced, besides the western coast of England, all Ireland and Scotland, without mentioning the Irish colonies in Gaul and Belgium. Let us repeat that the opposition which rose in that Church against conformity to Roman rites and usages was exactly proportioned to the degree of patriotic resistance excited by the invasion of the Saxons, behind whom appeared the Roman missionaries. This resistance was desperate among the British Christians, who retained the memory or daily felt the weight of the terrible excesses of the conquest. It was less violent and less prolonged in Caledonia, and came to a conclusion there as soon as the struggle ceased between the Celts and the Saxons. And it was almost non-existent in Ireland, where, except in the incursion of Egfrid, which was universally blamed by the Northumbrian saints, the Saxons never penetrated by the strong hand, and where the two races lived peaceably together. Nothing could give more satisfactory proof how little the fundamental truths of Christianity and the infallible authority of the Church had to do with the matter, and how much in it was national rather than religious.[1]

In all that concerns the special subject of these volumes, it will be remarked that the result of the struggle between the two great elements which disputed the empire of the monastic world was the same in the British Islands as in Gaul. This struggle was much longer and more serious in Great Britain, because it was complicated by national dislike, legitimate resistance, and an unappeasable resentment, which had no place in the influence exercised in France by Columbanus of Luxeuil and his Irish monks. The rule and order of St. Benedict were naturally associated,

[1] VARIN, 2e *Mémoire*.

in the eyes of the vanquished and dispossessed Celts, with the ferocious foreigners who pursued them even to the mountain-glens and islands, in which they found a last asylum. Besides, the Columba of Iona, the great patriarch of the Celtic monks in Great Britain, was, it appears to us, a much more attractive personage than his illustrious namesake of Luxeuil; his sons, his heirs, Aïdan, Adamnan, and so many others, had a greater fascination, a much greater influence upon the masses and upon events than the successors of Columbanus among the Gallo-Franks. At the same time the sons of St. Benedict, the victors of the struggle, from St. Augustin to Bede, were much more remarkable men than the greater part of the Gallo-Frankish Benedictines of their day. St. Eloysius and St. Leger, whose history we shall soon relate, were scarcely equal to Wilfrid, Cuthbert, Benedict Biscop, and the Venerable Bede. The latter, besides, are more entirely monks, more completely identified with the Benedictine institution. It is, however, evident on both sides of the Channel that the Celtic element fell, died away, and disappeared before the Roman element as personified in the order of St. Benedict. The Benedictine influence everywhere carried the day, and prepared for the Church those valiant legions which, after having edified and disciplined France, and conquered and civilised England, marched on to new victories, and extended beyond the Rhine and the Elbe the frontiers of Christendom.

CHAPTER IV

THE VENERABLE BEDE

The entire history of this period is summed up in the Venerable Bede.—His works.—Encyclopædical character of his genius.—His theological and scientific writings; his love for the classics.—His *History of the English*.—His scrupulous care to prove its truth.—His soul.—The love of virtue and truth evident in all his writings.—He is himself the type of the noble lives he records.—His life passed entirely in the cloister of Yarrow.—He is spared in his youth by the pestilence which carries off the whole community except himself and his abbot.—His different masters; his diligence in work.—His extensive connections.—His friendship with Abbot Acca.—His works on Holy Scripture.—His celebrated letter to Bishop Egbert of York upon the abuses of ecclesiastical government and monastic life.—His bold freedom does not diminish his authority.—He is accused of heresy in popular drinking-songs.—His intimacy with the monks of Lindisfarne.—Narrative of his death by an eye-witness.—His worship and his relics.—Contrast between the country he lived in and the actual condition of Northumberland.

"O Venerable Bede!
The saint, the scholar, from a circle freed
Of toil stupendous, in a hallowed seat
Of learning, where thou heardst the billows beat
On a wild coast, rough monitors to feed
Perpetual industry. Sublime Recluse!
The recreant soul, that dares to shun the debt
Imposed on human kind, must first forget
Thy diligence, thy unrelaxing use
Of a long life; and in the hour of death
The last dear service of thy passing breath."

—WORDSWORTH.

THE period of history which we have just recorded is crowned by one of those great figures which stand out above the sea of ages, and triumph over the forgetfulness as well as over the systematic contempt of frivolous generations. The name

of Bede, after having been one of the greatest and most popular in Christendom, still remains invested with an unchangeable fame. He is the type of that studious and learned life which, in the eyes of many, sums up the entire mission of the monk. He was the most cultivated man, the greatest intellectual personage of his country and age; but he holds a still greater position in the eyes of those to whom he has been a guide and master throughout a laborious and bewildering task. By the student who has passed several years almost entirely in his company, he is venerated as a saint and loved as a friend, and, without absolving him of his patriotic prejudices and partialities, the spirit does reverence to his character still more than to his glory.

Let us then examine his works, his spirit, and his life.

We turn to his works in the first place, which have made him the wonder and honour of his age, as well as a father and doctor of the Church. This Anglo-Saxon, born at the end of the Christian world, and of a race which half a century before his birth was still plunged in the darkness of idolatry, at once reveals himself clothed in the fulness of all enlightenment known to his time. Thanks to the unwearying activity of his mind, and the universal extension of his researches, his fame became European, and lasted through all the middle ages. It was not only the great historian whom, during his lifetime, and for long centuries after his death, men admired, as we ourselves admire him—it was, in addition to this, the master whose vast erudition embraced all that was then studied and known in the world. The universal character of his genius is that which most astonished his contemporaries, and has even excited surprise among our own.

He was for England what Cassiodorus was for Italy and St. Isidore for Spain. But he had, in addition, an influence and echo beyond his own country which has been surpassed by none: his influence upon Christendom was as rapid as it was extensive, and his works, which soon found a place in

all the monastic libraries of the West, brought down his fame to the period of the Renaissance. He wrote at his pleasure in prose or verse, in Anglo-Saxon and in Latin; and many of his writings prove that he was acquainted with Greek.[1] The greater part of his works were devoted to theology and its cognate studies. In the list which he himself made out, three years before his death, of the forty-five works which he had written up to that time, he enumerates, in the first place, his commentaries and homilies upon Holy Scripture, specially drawn from the Fathers, so as to form a summary, for the use of his countrymen and of all Christians, of the traditional doctrines of the Church. These Biblical studies occupied him much during his whole life, and he professed a marked preference for that source of human knowledge which, to his eyes, surpassed all others, as much in its antiquity as by its divine origin and moral usefulness.[2] He plunged into this study with an ardour so intelligent and persevering that it won him, in the eyes of the most illustrious of his countrymen, St. Boniface, the reputation of being one of the most sagacious investigators of the Holy Scriptures.[3] In his Martyrology, his historical summaries, and his biographies of the saints, he added a demonstration of the government of God by facts and the lives of men to the theoretic exposition of the teachings of the faith.

But, far from confining himself to theology, he wrote with success upon astronomy and meteorology, physics and music, philosophy and geography, arithmetic and rhetoric, grammar

[1] The translation which he had made of the Gospel of St. John from Greek into Latin is unhappily lost.—GILES, *Life of Bede*, p. 51. M. Ozanam, in his *Etudes Germaniques*, quotes a paper from M. Renan, crowned by the Academy, but not published, which proves that the study of Greek was maintained among the Anglo-Saxon monks long after its introduction by the Archbishop St. Theodore.

[2] "Sancta Scriptura cæteris omnibus scripturis, non solum auctoritate, quia divina; vel utilitate, quia ad vitam ducit æternam; sed et antiquitate et ipsa præeminet."—*De Schematibus Scripturæ*, ap. *Act. SS. O. S. B.*, t. iii. p. 506.

[3] "Sagacissimi investigatoris Scripturarum monachi Bedæ."—S. BONIFACII, *Epist. ad Huetbertum Abbatem.*

and versification, without omitting medicine, and without disdaining to descend even to orthography and numeration. His treatises have almost always the form of abridgments or catechisms adapted to the education of his monastic disciples. He thus penetrated, with a bold and unwearying step, into all the paths then open to the human intelligence, with a clearness and extent of vision truly surprising for the age and circumstances under which he lived. He thus won the name of Father of English learning, given to him by the greatest of modern Englishmen.[1] His scientific essays, *De Rerum Natura*, and *De Temporum Ratione*, contain a first essay towards a universal chronology, and afterwards sum up with method and precision the physical and astronomical sciences, which had, among our ancestors, survived the decay of the Roman Empire. Good judges have even acknowledged that he had gathered more actual truths and fewer errors than are to be found in any Roman books upon similar subjects.[2] In this region, as elsewhere, our worthy Anglo-Saxon appeals with respectful confidence to the authority of Aristotle, Hippocrates, and Pliny. Like all the scholars and writers of Christian ages, he shows a certain satisfaction in exhibiting his familiarity with classic authors. He has left to us, or at least there have been attributed to him, collections of sentences drawn from Plato, Seneca, and, above all, Cicero, of whom he was an enthusiastic admirer. He often quotes Ovid and Lucan, Statius, Lucretius, and still oftener Virgil, whom he quotes even in the tales of the miracles of his Northumbrian saints.[3] He has also attempted to imitate

[1] "Father of English learning"—this is the name given him by Burke, *Essay on English History*, p. 229.

[2] SHARON TURNER, *History of the Anglo-Saxons*, vol. iii. p. 403. According to this author, Bede's work is sufficient of itself to prove that the irruption of the Teutonic nations into the Roman empire was in no way the substitution of barbarism for knowledge.

[3] Thus, in relating the case of a demoniac at the tomb of the saint and King Oswald at Bardeney, he uses the well-known line—

"Conticuere omnes, intentique ora tenebant."

The illustrious Newman has fully established the absurdity of the sup-

him in a pretty eclogue on the return of spring.[1] He thus presents, in the eighth century, the type of that character of *scholar*—that is to say, of a man profoundly imbued with classic literature—which the English of the present day still prize so highly, and which the princes of public eloquence,[2] not less than the chiefs of the episcopate, esteem one of their highest distinctions. It does not seem, however, that his familiarity with these illustrious heathens weakened him either in Christian feeling or in the monastic spirit; and nothing in his life contradicts the touching prayer with which he ends the list of his literary labours: "Oh, good Jesus, who hast deigned to refresh my soul with the sweet streams of knowledge, grant to me that I may one day mount to Thee, who art the source of all wisdom, and remain for ever in Thy divine presence."[3]

This constant thought of God, of the soul, and of eternal salvation which is evident in all the works of his laborious life, and manly intelligence, shows itself at the beginning of the great work which still wins for him the attention and gratitude of all friends of the truth. "I entreat," he says in his Preface, "all those of our nation who read this History, or hear it read, to recommend often to the divine clemency the infirmities of my body and of my soul. Let each man in his province, seeing the care which I have taken to note down everything that is memorable or agreeable for the inhabitants of each district, pay me back by praying for me." "Dear and good father," he also writes

position made by Milman, the learned Anglican Dean of St. Paul's, that Bede and other monastic doctors knew classical antiquity only at second-hand by extracts or isolated fragments. This idea is contradicted by all the monuments of the time, as well as by the very nature of the monastic spirit and studies.—*Atlantis*, 1859, n. 3, p. 31.

[1] "*Cuculus*, sive Veris et Hiemis conflictus," vol. i. p. 35, ed. Giles. Compare p. clxix.

[2] Mr Gladstone, commentator, and Lord Derby, translator, of Homer.

[3] "Teque deprecor, bone Jesu, ut cui propitius donasti verba tuæ scientiæ dulciter haurire, dones etiam benignus, aliquando ad te fontem omnis sapientiæ pervenire et apparere semper ante faciem tuam."

when sending the first copy of his History to the friend who had suggested it to him, "beloved friend in Christ, remember, I beseech you, my weakness, you and all the servants of Christ who live with you; remember to intercede for me with the merciful Judge, and make all those who read my humble work do the same."[1]

This humble work—this *pamphlet*, as it is called by the great and modest writer—was nothing less than that *Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation*, which has made Bede not only the father of English history, but the true founder of history in the middle ages. The most competent authorities have recognised in him a chronicler well informed and systematic, an able and penetrating critic, on whom the rigorous precision of his language, and the scrupulous accuracy of his narrative, bestow the full right of being heard and having his testimony weighed, even upon facts which could not come under his personal observation.[2] Besides, all his narrative which is not founded upon what he himself saw or heard, is given on the authority of contemporaries always conscientiously quoted and carefully designated or described by him. "I have consulted individually," he says, "in all that refers to Northumbria, innumerable writers in addition to all that I could answer for myself. . . . But I pray my reader humbly, if he finds that I have written anything which is not the truth, not to blame me severely for it, since, according to the true law of history, I have sincerely laboured to put into

[1] "Omnes . . . nostræ nationis legentes sive audientes, suppliciter precor ut pro meis infirmitatibus et mentis et corporis . . . sæpius intervenire meminerint: et in suis quique provinciis hanc mihi remunerationis vicem rependant, ut qui de singulis provinciis . . . quæ memoratu digna atque incolis grata credideram diligenter adnotare curavi."—*Hist. Eccles., Præfatio gloriosissimo Regi Ceoluulfo.* "Semper amantissime in Christo pater optime, . . . te supplex obsecro ut pro mea fragilitate cum his qui tecum sunt, apud pium judicem sedulus intercedere memineris: sed et eos quos eadem nostra opuscula pervenire feceris, hoc idem facere monueris."—*Epist. ad Albinum Abbat.*, Op. Minora, p. 229.

[2] LAPPENBERG, OZANAM, VARIN.

writing for the instruction of posterity all that I could gather from common report."[1] The rare prudence with which he records those miracles which occupy so exaggerated a place in the annals, or, more strictly, in the habits and necessities of his time, is especially remarkable. He gives none upon his own personal authority, but always names the persons from whom they come, stating whether he has received them at first or second hand.[2]

Thus the most sceptical reader is unable to turn over the pages of Bede without being convinced at once of his sincerity and of his historical discrimination; while the Christian, eager to know and admire the works of God still more in the history of spiritual life than in the history of nations, can never feel sufficient gratitude to the unwearied worker who has endowed us with a book unrivalled among the historical works of Christianity, and who has given to England and its specially historic race the finest monument of national history which any modern people has yet received from its fathers.[3]

[1] "Si qua in his quæ scripsimus aliter quam se veritas habet posita repererit, non hoc nobis imputet qui, quod vera lex historiæ est, simpliciter ea quæ fama vulgante collegimus ad instructionem posteritatis litteris mandare studuimus."—*Præfatio.*

[2] Not a single miracle is to be found in the biography of the five first abbots of his own monastery, all of whom he had personally known; while they abound in his narrative of the life of St. Cuthbert, which he had from the monks of Lindisfarne. This is remarked by the wise and pious Lingard.—*Anglo-Saxon Church*, ii. 102, 103.

[3] All who have had to make researches into mediæval historians, and to whom it is of consequence to save their time and eyesight, know the inestimable value of a good, portable, and easily-read edition. Such persons will thank us for pointing out to them, among the numerous editions of the Venerable Bede, that published at Oxford in 1846, by Robert Hussey, bachelor in theology and professor of history. It contains in one volume all the *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*, with the lives of the abbots of Wearmouth and Yarrow, and Bede's letter to Archbishop Egbert. It also contains all the divers readings and notes of the great edition of Smith (1722), rectified and completed with exemplary clearness and sobriety by the editor. If he had added to his volume Bede's life of St. Cuthbert, the letter of the other Cuthbert upon the death of the historian,

This historian of souls begins by making us acquainted with his own; for who does not recognise, by the fashion in which a man tells the tale of the trials of virtue and truth here below, what he himself would have been capable of doing or suffering for them? The soul which thus betrays itself in his narrative is holy and full of grace. Not only in his beautiful narrations of ceaseless self-devotion, and of all the wonders of which man regenerated by faith is capable, but in the person of Bede himself, we find a complete type of that humility, serenity, and generous fervour which have won him throughout all Christendom the surname of Venerable. The Christian virtues were united naturally in him to that thirst for knowledge, that love of study, that vivifying thirst for work, that noble thoughtfulness of things divine and human, which make our monk-historian so interesting a personage in the history of the human mind. An esteemed writer [1] reproaches him with having been more Roman than English. I consider this reproach quite unfounded; no trace is to be found of the least sacrifice of his patriotism to his orthodoxy. He certainly preferred the Roman to the Celtic spirit; but it was his Anglo-Saxon patriotism, and not his Roman predilections, which dictated to him certain judgments inspired by national prejudice against the vanquished Britons in spiritual as well as temporal affairs. He had, like all other men, his preferences, his weaknesses, his blindness—but never has he willingly disguised, mutilated, or betrayed the truth; on the contrary, he served and loved with his best powers not only truth but justice, and, as it has been well said by

and a map, this excellent publication would have left nothing to be desired. Justice obliges us to name here by the side of Bede a writer of our own day, M. W. B. Maccabe, who, in his *Catholic History of England* (London, 1847–49, 2 vols.), has devoted himself to a faithful reproduction of the narratives of Bede and other ancient historians, and, by giving a faithful and minute picture of the three first centuries of English history, deserves the gratitude of those who love to know the truth without being able to seek it at the fountainhead.

[1] Lappenberg.

an upright historian[1] of our own day, impartiality consists in being just, not in being neuter.

His life may be regarded as a faithful mirror of the laborious and holy existence of those vast cloisters which continued to rise in England under the rule of St. Benedict, and which were not less numerous in the eighth than in the seventh century. It was entirely passed in the monastery which had sheltered his childhood. He was born in 673,[2] in one of the seventy detached manors of public property (Folc-lands), which King Egfrid bestowed on Abbot Benedict Biscop on his fourth return from Rome. The little Bede, whose name in Anglo-Saxon means *prayer*, was intrusted by his relatives at the age of seven to Benedict, who had just completed his monastery of Wearmouth. But the holy and learned abbot soon transferred the charge and education of his young pupil to his coadjutor Ceolfrid, when, with his twenty monks, old and young, the latter removed a short distance off, to found at the mouth of the Tyne the colony of Yarrow. They were no sooner installed in their new home than a cruel epidemic seized the colony. It carried off all the monks who could sing in the choir, except the abbot alone and the young Bede, still a child, who was his favourite pupil. These two continued to celebrate as they best could, among their tears and regrets, the entire canonical service, with obstinate precision, until new brethren joined them.[3] There are few who will not be touched by the thought of these two representatives of

[1] FRANZ DE CHAMPAGNY, *Correspondant*, vol. xii. p. 785.

[2] According to Mabillon and Lingard; not in 674, as say Pagi and Stephenson.

[3] "Abbas . . . multum tristis, præcepit ut, intermisso ritu priori, psalmodiam totam, præter Vesperam et Matutinas, sine antiphonis transigerent: quod cum unius hebdomadis spatio inter multas ejus lacrymas et querimonias esse actitatum, diutius hoc fieri non ferens rursus statuit: ut antiphonatæ psalmodiæ juxta morem instauraretur, cunctisque adnitentibus, per se et quem prædixi puerum, quæ statuerat, non parvo cum labore complebat."—BEDE, t. vi., App., p. 421. See above, p. 183, note 2.

Northumbrian Christianity and Anglo-Saxon monachism, the one already mature and illustrious, the other an obscure child predestined to fame, singing all alone the praises of God in their cloister depopulated by death, and awaiting the future with resigned yet unconquerable faith!

At the death of Benedict Biscop, when Ceolfrid was called to the head of the reunited monasteries, which now formed but one community,[1] the young Bede remained at Yarrow, which he never left. There he received deacon's orders at nineteen, and at the age of thirty the priesthood from the hands of St. John, called of Beverley, who then occupied the see of Wilfrid at Hexham. And there he passed all the rest of his life, which was dedicated to study and meditation on Holy Scripture, without other amusement than the daily songs of the choir—without other pleasure, as he has himself said, than to learn, to teach, and to write.[2]

At the same time, when Bede tells us that he passed all his life in the same monastery, it must not be supposed that he denied himself the expeditions which occupied so considerable a part in the lives of the principal monks. Notwithstanding the great authority which attached to Benedict Biscop's double foundation, and the number of monks who hastened to it, it is difficult to imagine how the young monk could follow, without leaving his monastery, the lessons of all those whom at various periods he calls his masters. For whether at Yarrow or elsewhere, he received an education both valuable and varied. Among those who introduced him into the study of the Bible, he indicates a monk trained by Ceadda, the humble and earnest rival of

[1] See above, pp. 181 and 186.

[2] "Cum essem annorum septem, cura propinquorum datus sum educandus . . . cunctumque ex eo tempus vitæ in ejusdem monasterii habitatione peragens, omnem meditandis Scripturis operam dedi; atque inter observantiam disciplinæ regularis et quotidianam cantandi in ecclesia curam, semper aut discĕre, aut docere, aut scribere dulce habui." —BEDE, *Hist. Eccles.*, v. 24.

Wilfrid, and, in consequence, imbued with all that was purest and most irreproachable in Celtic tradition;[1] while Greek was taught by monks of the school founded by Theodore in his metropolis of Canterbury,[2] and ecclesiastical music by the precentor of St. Peter's in the Vatican, whom Pope Vitalianus sent to England with Benedict Biscop.[3]

From pupil he soon became master, and that of the highest rank. It is evident from various passages of his works that his days and nights, of which a very moderate part was given to sleep, were divided between the studies and researches which he pursued to his last hour, the instructions which he gave to the six hundred monks of his double community, without reckoning the foreign monks whom he admitted to his lessons, and the composition of the books which have immortalised him. An existence more completely occupied it would be difficult to imagine. Except during the course of his last illness, he had no assistant in his work. "I am my own secretary," he said; "I dictate, I compose, I copy all myself." Though he was not unconscious of the obstacles which the yoke—or, as he himself says, the servitude of the rule—threw in the way of his work, he never withdrew himself from it;[4] and long after his death his scrupulous exactness in fulfilling all its obligations, especially that of singing the common service, was told in his praise.[5]

The laborious severity of this life in the cloister did not, however, put any obstacle in the way of his extensive and important intercourse with the world outside. His friendships

[1] "Frater quidam de eis qui me in Scripturis erudiebant et erat in monasterio ac magisterio illius (Ceaddæ) educatus, vocabulo Trumberct." —*Hist. Eccles.*, iv. 3.

[2] See vol. iii. p. 434. [3] See above, p. 178.

[4] "Injuncti me operis labori supposui: in quo ut innumera monasticæ servitutis retinacula præteream ipse mihi dictator, simul notarius et librarius existerem."—*Epistola ad Accam*, Opera, i. 179.

[5] ALCUINI *Opera*, i. p. 282.

were almost all produced or occasioned by the composition of his great historical work. He was urged to undertake it by Albinus, whom we have already remarked as the principal disciple of the Archbishop Theodore and the African Abbot Adrian, the first Anglo-Saxon ever called to govern the great monastery of St. Augustin at Canterbury. Albinus furnished him with memoranda of all that had happened in Kent and the neighbouring counties in the time of the missionaries sent by St. Gregory;[1] he even sent a priest of the adjoining diocese of London to Rome, to search in the archives of the Roman Church, with the permission of the reigning Pope, Gregory II., for the letters of his predecessors and other documents relative to the mission to England.[2] All the bishops of England also assisted in the work by transmitting to the author what information they could collect concerning the origin of the faith in their dioceses, and the principal acts of the holy personages who had lived in them. The abbots and monks of the most important monasteries also furnished their contingent. The details given on this subject by Bede himself show that a constant communication was kept up between the principal centres of religious life, and that an amount of intellectual activity as surprising as admirable, when the difficulty of communication and the internal wars which ravaged England are taken into consideration, existed among their inhabitants.

In addition to his great historical work, his correspondence gives evidence of the number of visits he must have paid and received on the subjects of his studies and writings. There is no proof that he was ever at Rome, to which in his day so many Anglo-Saxon monks and princes crowded, though this was long believed.[3] But it is known that he

[1] Bede describes him as "vir per omnia doctissimus."

[2] "Perscrutato sanctæ Ecclesiæ Romanæ scrinio."—*Prolog.*

[3] From a letter written by Pope Sergius, given by William of Malmesbury, but which does not refer to our Bede, according to Mabillon.—*Act. SS. O. S. B.*, t. iii. p. 509; and LINGARD, *Antiquities*, vol. ii. pp. 410, 415.

was on terms of friendship with the king of the Northumbrians, to whom he dedicated his History of England, and with the king of Kent, to whom he addressed a letter upon the celebration of Easter. Among the bishops of his time his most intimate friend was Acca, the companion and successor of Wilfrid at Hexham. This learned and magnificent prelate took the warmest interest in literature and the arts. After having ornamented with many great works the abbey church built by his master at Hexham, he added a very large and noble library, according to Bede, of which the latter made great use. They were in intimate and constant communication. Bede dedicated several of his works in prose and verse to the successor of Wilfrid; and Acca, who loved, like Bede, to quote from the classics, and who, like Gregory the Great, had a fancy for playing upon words, insisted that his laborious friend, who had given him a commentary upon the Gospel by St. Mark, should add to it a commentary on Luke.[1] The correspondence between these two Anglo-Saxon monks, while doing no discredit to their ability, is specially honourable to their hearts, and shows to what a height prayer and study had developed in the Northumbrian cloisters the affectionate sentiments and tender feelings of friendship. In this correspondence Bede lavishes assurances of his regard on him, whom he calls the most loved and longed-for of all bishops.[2] He shows himself to be, as he says, ruled and inspired by that trust and mutual tenderness which believes and hopes everything from the heart it loves.[3] At the same time those pure and noble motives which guided him in his

[1] "Beatum Lucam luculento sermone expone."—T. i. p. cliii., ed. Giles. See other editions, *ap.* RAINE, *The Priory of Hexham*, pp. 32, 33, 34.

[2] "*Dilectissime* ac desideratissime omnium qui in terris morantur *antistitum*." And elsewhere: "Bene vale semper, amantissime antistes, nostri memor in Domino. . . . Domino beatissimo et omnium desideratissimo Accæ episcopo Beda humilis presbyter."

[3] "Non hæc certa alia quam indubitata mutui fiducia facit amoris, quæ de amico pectore omnia duntaxat quæ fieri possunt, credit, omnia sperat."—P. 179, ed. Giles.

studies and commentaries on Holy Scripture, which held the greatest place in his life, and have so much contributed to the increase of his influence on Christendom, are fully apparent in his letters. Both here and elsewhere the reader perceives by what a pious and patriotic anxiety he was moved to combat the ignorance and lukewarmness of the new Catholics of England, by making them capable of reading and understanding the Bible.[1] To bring to the level of all capacities the most approved explanations of obscure passages; to seek out with scrupulous care the mystic sense and spiritual use of Biblical narratives; at once to go deeply into and to simplify that study of the sacred words which is so dear and so necessary to real piety; to draw from it the lessons, and especially the consolations pointed out by the Apostle St. Paul,[2] and of which we have so much need in the sharp anguish of this sombre life, and during the prolonged delays of Divine justice; to give thus an answer to the anxiety which filled the minds of the great monks who were the apostles of England, and of other ancient nations: such was the task of our Bede. He gave himself up to it with a fervour which never relaxed; with a perseverance which consumed his nights and days; with touching and sincere modesty; with delicate precautions against the danger of being taken for a plagiarist;[3] with a courage which sometimes failed him under the greatness of the task, and the multitude of obstacles in his way, but only to spring up again more unconquerable than ever; and, in short, with a solidity and assurance of doctrine which have kept for

[1] "Nostræ, id est Anglorum gentis, inertiæ consulendum ratus."—*Epist. ad Eusebium*, p. 193, ed. Giles.

[2] See especially *Epistola ad Accam de Templo Salomonis*, p. 171, ed. Giles.

[3] "Sollicitus per omnia ne majorum dicta furari, et hæc quasi mea propria componere. . . . Qui in legis divinæ meditatione etsi non (ut ipsi scripsisti) dies noctesque pervigiles ducere sufficio . . . operis immensitate perterritus et obstrepentium causarum (quas tu melius nosti) necessitate præpeditus. . . . Opusculum velocissime quantum tempus dederat, ne tua sacrosancta voluntas impediretur, emendatum membranulis indideram."—*Epist. ad Accam*, pp. 180, 184.

him, till the present time, a place among the best authorised interpreters of the Catholic faith.[1]

Another bishop with whom Bede had much intercourse was Egbert, bishop of York, a brother of the king of Northumbria, and a disciple of Bede himself. Sometimes the prince-bishop would visit his former master at Yarrow; sometimes Bede, in return, went to the episcopal monastery of York, where he occupied himself in superintending the school established by Egbert, or sought out recollections of Paulinus and of Wilfrid, and all the details of that religious history of Northumbria which without him would have fallen into forgetfulness for ever. The two friends studied together during these visits. A year before his death, not being able to accept an invitation from Egbert, Bede addressed to him a letter, which has been preserved, and which is a sort of treatise upon the spiritual and temporal government of Northumbria.[2] It displays, in the first place, the manly independence of Bede's judgment and language, and the great authority which this simple monk possessed even in the eyes of the princes and pontiffs of his country. It throws, at the same time, a fresh and full light upon the abuses which had glided into the Anglo-Saxon Church, and specially into the administration of monastic possessions.

He begins by recommending the bishop to study and meditate the Holy Scriptures, especially the Epistles of St. Paul to Titus and Timothy, and the Pastoral of St. Gregory; and exhorts him to avoid idle and gossiping conversation and bad company—"for," he adds, "there are bishops who, instead of surrounding themselves with religious and chaste

[1] An idea of his spirit and style may be attained by reading in the Roman Breviary the service for All Saints' Day and the two days following, in which several of the lessons are taken from his *De Sanctis*.

[2] "Memini te hesterno dixisse anno, cum tecum aliquot diebus legendi gratia in monasterio tuo demorarer, quod hoc etiam anno velles, cum in eundem devenires locum, me quoque, ob commune legendi studium, ad tuum accire colloquium." This letter was written in 734 or 735. Egbert took possession of the see of Wilfrid in 732.

persons, are accompanied only by buffoons or drunkards, who take more thought how to fill their bellies than how to feed and sanctify their souls."[1]

He then continues as follows: "Your diocese is too extensive to permit you to visit all the hamlets and out-of-the-way corners in it every year. You must then establish, as coadjutors in each village, priests who will preach the Word of God, celebrate the divine mysteries, and baptize. And, above all, let the priests teach all your diocesans to know the Apostles' Creed and the Lord's Prayer by heart. Those who do not understand Latin ought to be able to sing or say the *Pater* and the *Credo* in their own language; and I say this not only for the laity but also for the clerks and monks who do not understand Latin. It is especially for the use of those uninstructed priests that I have translated the Creed and the *Pater* into English. When you thus stir up the people of God by frequent and common prayer to understand, love, hope for, and seek heavenly gifts, your paternal solicitude will receive from the Pastor of pastors a reward so much the more noble that it is seldom merited by bishops of our nation."[2] Bede entreats his friend, in continuation, to neglect no means of giving to the lay population pastors capable of teaching them the doctrines of salvation, the hatred of sins which are odious to the Lord, and the practice of good works; he insists

[1] "Quod non ita loquor, quasi te aliter facere sciam, sed quia de quibusdam episcopis fama vulgatum est, quod . . . nullos secum alicujus religionis aut continentiæ viros habeant, sed potius illos qui risui, jocis, fabulis, comessationibus et ebrietatibus . . . subigantur, et magis quotidie ventrem dapibus quam mentem sacrificiis cœlestibus pascant."

[2] "Et quia latiora sunt spatia . . . quam ut solus per omnia discurrere et in singulis viculis atque agellis verbum Dei prædicare . . . sufficias . . . necessarium est ut plures tibi sacri ordinis adjutores adsciscas. . . . Idiotas, id est, eos qui propriæ tantum linguæ notitiam habent, hæc ipsa sua lingua discere ac sedulo decantare facito. . . . Propter quod et ipse multis sæpe sacerdotibus idiotis hæc utraque . . . in linguam Anglorum translatam obtuli. Quanto enim rariora hujus sacratissimi operis in episcopis nostræ gentis exempla reperis, tanto altiora . . . præmia recipies."

upon frequent and even daily Communion, according to the usage of the Church in Italy, Gaul, Africa, Greece, and throughout all the East. "Among us," says Bede, "thanks to the carelessness of the pastors, the most religious laymen dare not communicate except at Christmas, the Epiphany, and Easter, although there are numberless Christians, young and old, of pure life, who might without scruple approach these holy mysteries on the Sundays and feasts of the apostles and martyrs, as you have yourself seen in the holy apostolic Church of Rome." [1]

Having said this, he does not hesitate to point out to the prelate an abuse which was destined to rise throughout all the Church to a lamentable height. "Beware, dear bishop, of the crime of those who think only of drawing earthly lucre from their ministry. It is said that there are many villages in our Northumberland, situated among inaccessible hills or woods, where the arrival of a bishop to baptize, and teach the faith and the distinction between good and evil, has never been witnessed, yet where no one is exempt from payment of the bishop's dues. Thus there are bishops who, far from evangelising their flock without reward, as our Lord wills, receive, without preaching, the money which He has forbidden them, even while preaching, to accept." [2]

[1] "Eorum quoque qui in populari adhuc vita continentur sollicitam te necesse est curam gerere, et sufficientes eis doctores vitæ salutaris adhibere memineris. . . . Cum sint innumeri innocentes et castissimæ conversationis pueri ac puellæ, juvenes et virgines, senes et anus. . . . Ipsi etiam conjugati, si quis sibi mensuram continentiæ ostendat et virtutem castitatis insinuet, idem et licenter possint et libenter facere velint."

[2] "Attende quid gravissimi sceleris . . . antistes dilectissime. . . . Audivimus et fama est, quia multæ villæ ac viculi nostræ gentis in montibus sint inaccessis ac saltibus dumosis positi, ubi numquam multis transeuntibus annis sit visus antistes . . . quorum tamen nec unus quidem a tributis antistiti reddendis esse possit immunis . . . sicque fit ut episcoporum quidam non solum gratis non evangelizent." Lingard (*Anglo-Saxon Church*, vol. i. p. 183) believes that we have in this passage the first mention of tithes, of which there is no further notice elsewhere in Bede, and which do not appear to have been regularly established in England before the close of the eighth century.

Bede's idea was, that with the help of the good and pious King Ceolwulf, it would be very easy for the bishop of York, his relative and friend, to find a cure for these troubles by returning to the plan of St. Gregory the Great —re-establishing the metropolis of York, and dividing that diocese, which was still, notwithstanding the divisions which had been forced upon Wilfrid, much too large, among twelve suffragans. With his logical and practical spirit, our historian at once points out the means of arriving at this result without any fear of wounding the interests or exposing the infirmities of his order. "I know very well," he says, "that by the carelessness of the old kings, and their foolish liberality, it is difficult to find unappropriated lands to endow the new bishoprics. For this reason it appears to me that, after having deliberated on it in the great council, with the advice of the pontiff and the king, some existing monastery should be taken to be erected into a bishopric. And in order that the abbot and monks may not be tempted to opposition, they must be permitted to elect the future bishop among themselves, to be at once the head of the monastery and of the new diocese, or to choose one according to the canons outside their community, if no one suitable can be found within.[1] It would be so much the more easy to increase, if there is room for it, the endowment of new dioceses, that there exist, as we all know, numberless places which bear the name of monasteries without keeping up a shadow of monastic observance. To appropriate their posses-

[1] "Et quidem novimus quia per incuriam regum præcedentium, donationesque stultissimas factum est, ut non facile locus vacans ubi sedes episcopalis nova fieri debeat, inveniri valeat. . . . Quapropter commodum duxerim, habito majori concilio et consensu pontificali simul et regali edicto, prospiciatur locus aliquis monasteriorum ubi sedet episcopalis fiat. Et ne forte abbas et monachi resistere tentaverint, detur illis licentia, ut de suis ipsi eligant eum qui episcopus ordinetur et adjacentium locorum quotquos ad eamdem diœcesim pertineant, una cum ipso monasterio curam gerat episcopalem: aut si forte in ipso monasterio qui episcopus ordinari debeat inveniri nequeat, in ipsorum tamen juxta statuta canorum pendeat examine qui de sua diœcesi ordinetur antistes."

sions, according to the authority of public assemblies, for the endowment of new bishoprics, would be to substitute purity for incontinence, temperance for gluttony, and piety for vanity. Yes, there are vast and numerous establishments which are of use for nothing, neither for the service of God nor man. No monastic rule is observed among them; no advantage is drawn from them by the earls and knights who have the burden of defending our nation from the barbarians. He, then, who should make them into new bishoprics would be neither a usurper nor a prevaricator: he would do a work of salvation and an act of virtue."[1]

He then proceeds to forestall the objection which might be drawn from the sanction given by kings and national assemblies to the gifts which had endowed these pseudo-monasteries. "Would it, then, be a sin to correct the unjust decisions of old chiefs by the revision of more enlightened men, and to abrogate the lying formulas of certain scribes by the authority of priests and sages, in imitation of these good kings of Judah of whom Scripture speaks, who repaired the evil done by their impious predecessors? Let their example encourage you, in concert with our religious king, to destroy the unjust and irreligious decrees made by the former chiefs of our nation. You will thus provide at once for the spiritual and temporal necessities of our country. Otherwise we shall see at the same time the love and fear of Him who reads the heart disappear from among us, and the number of warriors diminish who are charged with the defence of our frontiers against the incursions of the barbarians; for you know better than I do, there are so many lands occupied by false monks that nothing remains to be given to the

[1] "Sunt loca innumera . . . in monasteriorum ascripta vocabulum, sed nihil prorsus monasticæ conversationis habentia; e quibus velim aliqua de luxuria ad castitatem . . . synodica auctoritate transferantur. . . . Maxima et plurima sunt quæ . . . neque Deo neque hominibus utilia sunt, quia neque regularis secundum Deum ibi vita servatur, neque illa milites siva comites secularium potestatum qui gentem nostram a barbaris defendant possident."

sons of nobles and old warriors; by which they are reduced either to cross the sea—deserting the country which they ought to have defended with their swords—or to consume their manhood in debauchery and idleness, for want of a suitable establishment on which to found a family."[1]

To these considerations of political and general interest, which throw so much light upon the military and territorial constitution of the Anglo-Saxon countries, Bede adds others which reveal not less pernicious abuses in the spiritual order.

"A still more serious crime," he says, "is committed when laymen, without either experience of or love for monastic life, give money to the kings as the price of certain lands, under pretence of building monasteries there—and then claim to themselves a hereditary right over these lands by royal edicts which are afterwards confirmed by the signatures of bishops, abbots, and the great people of this world. In the estates and villages thus usurped they live according to their own pleasure, exempt from all subjection either to God or man; sometimes, though laymen, ruling over monks, or rather gathering together under the guise of monks men who have been driven out of true monasteries for disobedience, or whom they can seduce out of such, or whom they have found wandering about the country; or even taking some of their vassels, whose heads they shave, and whom they bind to a kind of monastic obedience. What a monstrous spectacle is that of these pretended cells, filled with men having wives and children, who come from the conjugal bed to manage the internal affairs of a monastery! There are even some who have the effrontery to procure similar

[1] "Injusta principum judicia recto meliorum principum examine corrigantur, ac mendax stilus scribarum iniquorum discreta prudentium et sacerdotum sententia deleatur. . . . Ea quæ provinciæ nostræ sive secundum Deum sive secundum seculum sint utilia, prospicere: ne . . . rarescente copia militiæ secularis, absint qui fines nostros a barbarica incursione tueantur. . . . Omnino deest locus ubi filii nobilium vel emeritorum militum possessionem accipere possunt . . . ideoque vacantes ac sine conjugio, exacto tempore pubertatis, vel patriam pro qua militare debuerunt, trans mare abeuntes, relinquunt; vel . . . luxuriæ ac fornicationi deserviant."

convents for their wives, where these secular women dare to undertake the government of the servants of Christ.[1] Is there not room to say in this case, as says our proverb, that when the wasps make honeycombs it is to put poison inside instead of honey?"

He then proceeds to expose the disastrous consequences of these abuses, which, however, had begun only about thirty years before. Since the death of Aldfrid and the end of Wilfrid's pontificate, he continues, there was scarcely a great noble or *ealdorman* who had not taken advantage of his position to acquire such a monastery for himself, or even for his wife, and by degrees the officials and domestics of the kings had learned to do the same. They all professed to be abbots, while at the same time governors of provinces, or officers of the royal household, submitting to a kind of tonsure, in order, by their own authority, to raise themselves, though simple laymen, not only into monks but into abbots.[2] "All these scandals," says the venerable historian, "might have been avoided or repressed had not the bishops themselves been the principal offenders or accomplices, confirming by their signatures the concessions and grants of monasteries, and selling their base indulgence for money to the false abbots.[3] . . . I entreat you by the Lord, dearest bishop,

[1] "Usurpatis sibi agellulis sive vicis, liberi exinde a divino simul et humano servitio . . . laici monachis imperantes . . . quoscumque ob culpam inobedientiæ veris expulsos monasteriis alicubi forte oberrantes invenerint . . . vel quos ipsi de suis satellitibus ad suscipiendam tonsuram promissa sibi obedientia monachica invitare quieverint. . . . Modo conjugis ac liberorum procurandarum curam gerunt; modo exurgentes de cubilibus quid intra septa monasteriorum geri debeat . . . pertractant. . . . Quæ pari stultitia cum sint laicæ, famularum se Christi permittunt esse rectrices."

[2] "Nullus pene exinde præfectorum exstiteret qui non hujusmodi sibi monasterium in diebus suæ præfecturæ, suamque simul conjugem pari reatu nocivi mercatus astrinxerit. . . . Se abbates pariter et præfectos sive ministros aut famulos regis appellant . . . etsi a professione illa . . . sunt funditus extorres."

[3] "Si non ipsi pontifices magis hujusmodis sceleribus opem ferre atque adstipulari probarentur: qui . . . hujusmodi decreta injusta . . . suis

preserve your flock from the irruption of these dishonest wolves. Remember, that if you are a true and not a mercenary pastor, your duty is to examine carefully into all that is ill or well in every monastery of your diocese, in order that abbots and abbesses instructed in and subject to the holy rules may be found everywhere, worthy of presiding over a family of Christ's servants, and not an insolent and undisciplined crowd, disdainful of all spiritual rule. They must be taught resolutely that kings and great men, unless in cases of crimes against the princes themselves, have nothing to do with the monasteries, which remain under the sole authority of the bishops. It is your duty to prevent the devil from usurping those places consecrated to God, and substituting discord for peace, drunkenness for abstinence, debauchery and murder for chastity and charity. . . . I know well that my exhortations will meet many gainsayers, especially among those who are the authors or accomplices of the excesses I complain of. But you must treat with apostolic vigour those miserable successors of Ananias and Sapphira, who were cut off by sudden death from the society of the first monks, not even for usurping the possessions of others, but for having dishonestly retained what was their own.[1] When he describes avarice and cupidity as idolatry, the Apostle Paul manifestly justifies those who refuse their signature, even when exacted by the king, to these shameful bargains, and even those who strike through and erase all such fatal documents.[2] Do not then allow yourself to be stopped by those who, to protect the work of their covetousness, present before you charters

subscriptionibus confirmare satagunt, eadem ipsis phylargyria dictante, ad confirmandum male scripta, qua emptores comparandum hujusmodi monasto . . . coacti."

[1] "Ananiam et Saphiram monachorum collegio indignos etiam corporis morte mulctavit . . . et quidem illi non aliena colligere, sed sua incongrue retinere maluerunt."

[2] "Qui vel subscriptione avari mercatus, rege licet imperante, manum substraxerunt."

furnished with the signatures of great men and nobles.[1] Answer them in the words of our Lord, 'All that My Father in heaven has not planted shall be rooted out.' In short, do not permit those who never attempt to struggle, even in the smallest particular, against bodily or spiritual carnality, to lull themselves to sleep by a vain confidence in their salvation; dissipate the senseless illusion of those who believe that others will redeem them after their death by the celebration of holy mysteries of which their lives have made them unworthy, or that they will be absolved from their sins for the sake of some alms thrown to the poor in the midst of their daily indulgences and passions. The hand which gives to God must be, like the conscience, pure from all crime and soil.[2] This is my judgment against the venom of avarice. I should never come to an end had I to speak at equal length of other vices, from which God give you grace, my dearest bishop, to deliver your flock."

The whole of this admirable letter is thus occupied with the indignant protest of a true monk against the false monks, who already began to infect the life of the cloister, and against the greedy and feeble bishops who sanctioned or tolerated these unworthy abuses. If the example of the Venerable Bede had always and everywhere found imitators; if pure and courageous voices like his had risen in the bosom of the Church, especially in recent ages, to warn her against the incoming of corruption, hypocrisy, and secular covetousness, it may well be believed that the homicidal hand of Protestant or revolutionary vandalism would never have succeeded in sweeping away from the entire surface of the Christian world the glorious establishments founded by the munificence and piety of our fathers.

One thing must be gladly admitted, which is, that the

[1] "Qui si chartas protulerunt in defensionem concupiscentiarum suarum ascriptas, ac nobilium personarum subscriptione confirmatas."

[2] "Quum manus ipse et conscientia quæ munus offerat Deo, munda a peccatis debeat esse et absoluta."

bold freedom and noble independence of Bede did him no harm, and lessened in no way the great and just reputation which he enjoyed throughout England, a fame which soon spread into all Europe, and went on increasing after his death to such a point, that the council of Aix-la-Chapelle, held a hundred years afterwards, described him as an "admirable doctor." [1]

This pleasant and glorious life was not, however, without a cloud. He excited the criticism of violent and narrow spirits, like all other superior men. They even went so far as to treat him as a heretic, because he had in his Chronology combated the then general opinion that the world was to last only six thousand years, and because, in his division of the six ages of the world, he had appeared a little uncertain about the date ordinarily fixed as that of the Incarnation. This accusation of heresy made so much noise, that it was discussed even among the peasants, who scoffed at it in their drinking-songs; a fact which proves that if the great were then, as always, exposed to calumny, the popular masses of the day took a singular interest in their good fame. Bede, who took credit to himself for having always kept with scrupulous care within the limits of the strictest orthodoxy, was at once troubled and rendered indignant by this imputation. He grew pale with surprise and horror, as he says to one of his friends, a monk, in an apologetic letter —a letter full of pride and energy, which he charges his correspondent to read to Wilfrid, bishop of York, who seems to have given a certain encouragement to the slander by suffering it to be uttered at table in his presence.[2]

[1] "Quid venerabilis et modernis temporibus doctor admirabilis, Beda presbyter sentiat, videamus."—*Concil. Aquisgran.*, ii. præf., l. iii., ann. 836, ed. Coletti, ix. 875.

[2] "Hæc tristi mox admistione confudit, addendo videlicet, quod me audires a lascivientibus rusticis inter hæreticos per pocula decantari. . . . Exhorrui, fateor, et pallens percunctabar, cujus hæreseos arguerer . . . Quoniam illo præsente atque audiente insipientius sum prius appetitus conviciis, ipso etiam nunc audiente et dijudicante, . . . quam immeritus eadem convicia sum perpessus appareat. . . . Quod utique in cœna illa in

If, however, he had some enemies, he had more friends. Among these, in the first rank, it is pleasant to find the monks of Lindisfarne. Their friendship with Bede maintains and proves the link, which, notwithstanding certain differences of origin and opinion, attaches the island-cradle of the Christian faith in Northumbria to the last of the great monastic foundations, and the last of the great monks who illustrated that glorious coast. Bede asked that his name should be inscribed on the roll of monks in the monastery founded by St. Aïdan. He specially desired this favour in order that his soul after death might have a share in the masses and prayers of that numerous community as if he had been one of themselves.[1]

This pious anxiety to assure himself of the help of prayer for his soul after his death is apparent at every step in his letters. It imprints the last seal of humble and true Christianity on the character of the great philosopher, whose life was so full of interest, and whose last days have been revealed to us in minute detail by an eyewitness. Although the narrative has been often republished,[2] the reader does not tire of returning to it, and it must find a place here, for no historic document brings more clearly before our eyes the life, at once spiritual and literary, of the Anglo-Saxon cloisters. "You desire and expect of me," writes a monk

qua poculo debrius culpare studuit."—*Epist. ad Plegwinum monachum*, t. i. pp. 144–154. This Wilfrid is not the great St. Wilfrid, but Wilfrid II., who was Bishop of York from 717 to 732, after St. John of Beverley, and before Egbert.

[1] "Me defuncto, pro redemptione animæ meæ, quasi familiaris et vernaculi vestri, orare et missas facere, et nomen meum inter vestra scribere dignemini . . . ut in albo vestræ sanctæ congregationis meum nunc quoque nomen appareret."—*Præfatio ad Vit. S. Cuthberti.*

[2] In the last place by Ozanam, who has made a perfect picture of the life of Bede and the Anglo-Saxon Church of the eighth century. The name of the author of the narrative is Cuthbert; he was a disciple of Bede, and wrote from Yarrow to one of his fellow-pupils, named Cuthwine, who was established in a distant monastery, probably one belonging to the Celtic ritualists, according to a passage quoted by Lingard, *Anglo-Saxon Church*, vol. ii. p. 197.

of Yarrow to one of his absent brethren, "to tell you how Bede, our father and master, the beloved of God, departed from this world. . . . Nearly a fortnight before Easter he was seized by an extreme weakness, in consequence of his difficulty of breathing, but without great pain. He continued thus until Ascension, always joyous and happy, giving thanks to God day and night, and even every hour of the night and day. He gave us our lessons daily, and employed the rest of his time in chanting psalms; and passed every night, after a short sleep, in joy and thanksgiving, but without closing his eyes. From the moment of awaking he resumed his prayers and praises to God, with his arms in the form of a cross. O happy man! He sang sometimes texts from St. Paul and other scriptures, sometimes lines in our own language, for he was very able in English poetry."[1] Here the narrator interrupts himself to quote ten lines in Anglo-Saxon received from the lips of the dying Bede, and expressed in that short, sharp, and striking rhythm which characterises the verses of the shepherd Ceadmon, with which Bede has made us acquainted. "Before our forced departure," thus runs the song, "no man is more wise than he needs be; no man knows how much he ought to search, before leaving this world, what shall be the judgment of the soul for good or evil, after the day of death."[2] "He also sang," continues the witness, "anthems according to his liturgy and ours—among others, the following: 'O King of Glory, who now hast mounted in triumph above the skies, leave us not like orphans, but send us the spirit of truth promised to our fathers.' At these words, *like*

[1] "Lætus et gaudens . . . immo horis omnibus . . . totam noctem in lætitia et gratiarum actione pervigil ducebat, nisi quantum modicus somnus impediret. . . . In nostra quoque lingua, quæ est Anglica, ut erat doctus in nostris carminibus, nonnulla dixit."

[2] These lines, omitted by Mabillon in his edition of Cuthbert's story, which is taken from Simeon of Durham, are found in a manuscript of St. Gall, almost a contemporary of Bede, and there is no doubt of their authenticity. Cf. LINGARD, p. 409.

orphans, he burst into tears. An hour after, he repeated the same anthem, and we mingled our tears with his. Sometimes we wept, and sometimes we read, but we never read without weeping. Thus passed the forty days from Easter to Ascension. He was always at the height of joy, thanking God for his sickness.[1] He said with St. Paul, 'The Lord scourgeth every one that He receiveth;' and with St. Ambrose, 'I have not lived so as to blush at the thought of living with you; but I do not fear to die, because we have a good master.'[2]

"During all these days, in addition to the lessons he gave us and the psalms he sang with us, he undertook two pieces of work: a translation of the Gospel according to John into our English tongue for the use of the Church of God, and some extracts from Isidore, bishop of Seville. 'For,' said he, 'I would not have my children read lies, nor that after my death they should give themselves up to fruitless work.' On the Tuesday before Ascension he found himself much worse; his breathing became difficult, and his feet were swollen. He continued, nevertheless, to dictate in good spirits, and sometimes added, 'Make haste to learn, for I know not how long I may remain with you, or if my Creator may call me shortly.' On the eve of the feast, at the first dawn of morning, he desired that what had been commenced should be quickly finished, and we worked till the hour of tierce. Then we went to the procession with the relics of the saints, as the solemn occasion required. But one of us remained by him and said to him, 'There is still a chapter wanting, beloved father; would it fatigue you to speak any more?' Bede answered, 'I am still able to speak; take your pen, make it, and write rapidly.' The other obeyed. At the hour of nones he sent for the priests

[1] "Prorupit in lacrymas . . . luximus cum illo . . . altera vice legimus, altera ploravimus. Immo semper cum fletu legimus ut tali lætitia dies usque ad diem deduximus, et ille multum gaudebat."

[2] S. PAULINUS, in *Vit. S. Ambrosii.*

of the monastery, and distributed to them incense, spices, and fine linen, which he had kept as precious things; then bade them farewell, praying each of them to say masses for him. Thus passed his last day till the evening. Then the disciple of whom I have spoken said to him, 'Beloved master, there remains only one verse which is not written.' 'Write it then quickly,' he answered. And the young man having completed it in a few minutes, cried, 'Now it is finished.' 'You say truly, it is finished,' he said. 'Take my head in your arms and turn me, for I have great consolation in turning towards the holy place where I have prayed so much.' Thus, lying on the floor of his cell, he sang for the last time, 'Glory be to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,' and gave up the ghost as he pronounced the last of these divine names."[1]

The monastic sanctuary towards which the dying look of Bede was turned still remains in part, if we may believe the best archæologists, and his memory has survived the changes of time. An old oaken chair is still shown which he is supposed to have used. It is the only existing relic of this great saint. For he was a saint by the same title and in the same rank as the most illustrious in the Anglo-Saxon calendar. The title of Venerable, which was given to him only in the ninth century by a kind of universal consent, did not then as now imply an inferior position to that of saint or blessed in the celestial hierarchy. Like all the other saints of the period, without exception, he was canonised by popular veneration, tacitly approved by the

[1] "Nolo ut discipuli mei mendacium legant. . . . Totum illum diem hilariter dictabat. . . . Diserte cum festinatione. . . . Adhuc magister dilectissime, capitulum unum deest; videtur ne tibi difficile plus te interrogari? Facile est, accipe tuum calamum et tempera, et festinanter scribe. . . . Curre velociter et presbyteros adduc ad me. . . . Quædam pretiosa in mea capsella habes, id est piperem, oraria et incensa. . . . Accipe caput meum in manus tuas, quia multum me delectat sedere ex adverso loco sancto meo, in quo orare solebam. . . . In pavimento casulæ suæ decantans."

Church. Various miracles established or confirmed the fame of his sanctity: altars were consecrated to his memory; many pilgrims came to Yarrow to visit his tomb; his relics were stolen in the eleventh century, as so often happened, by a priest inspired by too ardent devotion, and carried to Durham, where they were placed with those of St. Cuthbert. They were an object of worship to the faithful up to the general profanation under Henry VIII., who pulled down the shrine and threw the bones on a dunghill along with those of all the other holy apostles and martyrs of Northumberland.[1]

It must, however, be admitted that his place in the worship of the faithful has not lasted so long as the glory attached to his name and the great fame which, rising in his native country, spread so rapidly over all Christendom.[2] His fame did honour to monastic institutions in general. Bede appeared to the Catholic world a model of that virtue and knowledge which the cloister was to make the peculiar property of Christian society. In him the great Roman monachism which he had seen triumph over Celtic influences found its personification. The sword of his words, said his

[1] If we may believe a competent judge, Mr Jewitt (*Gentleman's Magazine*, Dec. 1864), the choir of the little church now standing at Yarrow is as old as the church built by Benedict Biscop, and *inhabited*, as we may say, by Venerable Bede. This is the remnant which was discovered roofless by the three monks who, according to Simeon of Durham, visited the ruins in 1075. The learned archæologist thinks that he recognises, in the ornaments and in the primitive bays of this choir, the characteristics of Saxon architecture. We confess that it is difficult to conceive how this low and petty construction can represent any portion whatever of the edifice built and ornamented with so much magnificence by the founder of Yarrow, and described with such enthusiasm by the most illustrious of his guests. The tower, indeed, which is of fine Norman or Roman architecture, may very well date from the partial restoration in 1075. An inscription, evidently more modern than its date, fixes the dedication of the church on April 24, 681, in the 15th year of King Egfrid, and *Ceolfridi abbatis ejusdem ecclesiæ Deo auctore conditoris, anno IV.*

[2] "Anglia te celebrat: te totus personat orbis."

—Ancient epitaph quoted by Leland, *Collectanea*, vol iii. book iv. c. 23.

epitaph, was the safeguard of the fortresses occupied by his religious brethren.[1]

But it was especially the English nation, the last newcomer among Catholic nations, which had occasion to take pride in the great man given by her to Christendom. All the kingdoms of the Heptarchy claimed a share in the glory which could not be allowed to remain the exclusive possession of the Northumbrians—and the Anglo-Saxon missionaries, scattered through Germany, rivalled the monks who remained in their native island in the faithfulness of their devotion to his noble memory.[2]

The nations of Catholic Europe envied England the possession of so great a doctor, the first among the offspring of barbarous races who had won a place among the doctors of the Church. His illustrious successors, Boniface and Alcuin, emulated each other in celebrating his merits and services in the interest of souls, and in order to set him up as a permanent model to future generations.[3] Alcuin insists specially upon this with a precision of details which gives us one proof

[1] "Crystallus patriæ, gregis astrum, lumen avorum,
Laus juris, bajulus legis, honorque jacet.
Beda datus sacris, gravitate senex, puer annis,
Devotæ mentis æthera thure replet. . . .
Ense pio verbi confratrum castra tuetur
Ne Christi miles, hoste ruente, ruat."

—Epitaph quoted by Mabillon from a MS. belonging to De Thou.

"Beda, Dei famulus, monachorum nobile sidus,
Finibus e terræ profuit Ecclesiæ."

—Another epitaph quoted by Arnold Wion.

[2] "Et rectum quidem mihi videtur ut tota gens Anglorum in omnibus provinciis, ubicumque reperti sunt, gratias Deo referant, quia tam mirabilem virum illis in sua natione donavit."—S. BONIFACII et LULLI *Epist.*, ed. Jaffé, number 134. See the letter written by an abbot of Wearmouth to Lul, archbishop of Mayence, thanking him for having sent from Germany a silken stuff intended to wrap the relics of Bede.

[3] "Rogamus ut aliqua de opusculis sagacissimi investigatorius Scripturarum Bedan (*sic*) monachi, quem nuper in domo Dei apud vos, vice candelæ ecclesiasticæ, scientia scripturarum fulsisse audivimus, conscripta nobis transmittere dignemini."—BONIFACII *Epist.*, 672, ed. Jaffé.

the more how entirely the likings and manners of the Anglo-Saxon conquerors of England are reflected in the tastes of the modern English. "Remember," he writes to the monks of the community of Yarrow which Bede had made famous —"remember the nobility of your fathers, and be not the unworthy sons of such great ancestors; look at your many books, at the beauty of your churches and monastic buildings. Let your young men learn to persevere in the praises of God, and not in driving foxes out of their holes, or wearing out their strength running after hares. What folly to leave the footsteps of Christ, and run after the trail of a fox! Look at the noblest doctor of our country, Bede; see what zeal he showed for knowledge from his youth, and the glory which he has received among men, though that is much less important and less dazzling than his reward before God. Stir up, then, the minds of your sleepers by his example; study his works, and you will be able to draw from them, both for yourselves and others, the secret of eternal beauty."[1]

The fame of Bede has derived a special and increasing lustre from the fact that he was not only the first and most remarkable of Anglo-Saxons, but that, were he set aside, everything else concerning them would fall into obscurity;[2] thus it is not without reason that he has been compared to Homer, who rose like a resplendent meteor amid the night which precedes and the night which follows his appearance upon the horizon of Greek history.

The dark night of idolatry which covered Northumbria before the holy predecessors and contemporaries of Bede, has

[1] "Assuescant pueri laudibus astare superni Regis, non vulpium fodere cavernas, non leporum fugaces sequi cursus. Quam impium est Christi amittere obsequia et vulpium sequi vestigia! Discant pueri Scripturas sacras. . . . Recogitate nobilissimum hujus temporis magistrum Bedam presbyterum . . . qualem nunc habet inter homines laudem."—ALCUINI *Epist.* 13, ed. Froben, vol. i. p. 22.

[2] Certain contemporary chronicles find nothing to describe in the history of England during the seventh and eighth centuries except the existence of Bede. "Beda presbyter et monachus claret in Anglia."—*Chron. Holland Vetustiss.*, ad. an. 696, quoted by Mackintosh, vol. i. p. 83.

been replaced by the dark night of industry. The working of the coal-mines has transformed the face of the country. The light of day is positively darkened by thick volumes and heavy clouds of smoke belched out without intermission by the manufactories and workshops which are fed by the inexhaustible mineral wealth of the country. Newcastle, North and South Shields, Sunderland, Stockton, Darlington, Hull, all the centres of the coal-trade, have replaced in the attention and regard of men the old monastic cradles of Christian faith and civilisation, Lindisfarne and Yarrow, Tynningham and Coldingham, Tynemouth and Wearmouth, Hartlepool and Whitby. But what a contrast, even if we go no further than the surface, between the aspect of the country of old and that of to-day! The much-prized coal has covered this fine country with a veil of mourning. The verdure of the woods and fields is discoloured by it, the limpid waters soiled, the purity of the air infected, the light of the sun intercepted. Everything disposes us to believe that these are but material tokens of the internal and moral darkness, in the midst of which struggles the vast and formidable population which swarms in those craters of British commerce. The frightful density of these unknown and impenetrable masses conceals abysses of ignorance, vice, wretchedness, and resentment. There Paganism is restored. Notwithstanding many generous efforts, partial remedies, and honourable exceptions—notwithstanding the observance, still compulsory and respected, of the Sunday rest,—the love of lucre has created armies of slaves, tools without souls, but already longing, and with good reason, for a better fate, for a condition less painful than that, the duration and aggravation of which ought to fill with trembling every Christian and patriotic heart.

The light of faith and the moral law is still more wanting to them than daylight. Buried alive in their mines and manufactories, without pontiffs, without spiritual guides, a prey to all the disorders, excesses, and forgetfulness which

ever accompany the labour of a crowd, strangers to the thought of God, to any hope in a future life, to habits of modesty,[1] victims and instruments of the worship of mammon, they stand there like a perpetual menace to the blind egotism and formalism of the materialists of our age.

No man can admire more than I do the marvels of human intelligence and activity realised by the free genius of the English race; no man does more sincere homage to its natural and unconquerable instincts of religion. But who could behold without fear, in that district, once so fruitful in sanctuaries of prayer, virtue, and moral and intellectual life, the religious indifference and fierce thirst for gain which replace almost everywhere the tender and vigilant solicitude of the Church for souls? Who could be other than alarmed at sight of the deserted condition, the spiritual nullity, in which so many millions of our fellow-creatures are living? How can we cease to regret the days when the obedient fervour of the people answered so well to the zeal, knowledge, and disinterestedness of the clergy? and when, like the lighthouses which we now see everywhere, on the headlands, at the river's mouth, at the edge of rocky reefs, and along all the course of that dangerous and much frequented coast, offering their tutelary light to the sailor, there rose upon those shores, then desert, unknown, and inhabited only by a few savages, the sparkling lights, increasing from year to year, of Lindisfarne, Yarrow, Whitby, Coldingham, Wearmouth, and Tynemouth—centres of intellectual and moral life, as laborious as it was pure!

Perhaps the day may yet come—and may it not be far distant!—when as of old, amid the wonders and perils of modern activity, new centres of charity, enlightenment, and peace may light up one after the other, like so many celestial beacons to guide and warn souls in their pilgrimage towards eternal life.

[1] See above, p. 174, note 2, what has been said of the facts revealed by the Parliamentary Commission in the coal districts.

CHAPTER V

THE ROYAL MONKS

The star of Northumbria pales, notwithstanding the erection of the see of York into an archbishopric.—Sad end of the lineage of Oswy.—King Ceolfrid, to whom Bede dedicates his History, becomes a monk at Lindisfarne.—His successor Eadbert follows his example.—Other monk-kings.—Almost each dynasty of the Heptarchy furnishes its share: In East Anglia, Sigebert, who dies on the field of battle; In Essex, Sebbi, who leads back his people to the faith—his desire to die in solitude; and Offa, who dies at Rome; in Mercia, which inherited the preponderating power of Northumbria, Coenred, the travelling companion and fellow-novice of Offa; Ethelred, founder, monk and abbot of Bardeney.—Another Mercian king, Ceolred, dies in a debauch.—Ethelbald, pursued by Ceolred, takes refuge in the marsh of Croyland with the hermit Guthlac, who predicts to him that he will be king of Mercia.—What Guthlac had been before he became an anchorite.—His solitary life resembles those of some of the most illustrious saints of the monastic order.—Death of Guthlac.—Foundation of the celebrated abbey of Croyland upon the site of his cell.—Continuation and end of the reign of Ethelbald.—Remonstrances of the Anglo-Saxon missionaries in Germany.—The supremacy passes from Mercia to Wessex.—Three West Saxon kings abdicate to become monks or pilgrims to Rome: Centwin; Ceadwalla, the friend of Wilfrid, who lives just long enough to be baptized by the Pope; and Ina, the friend of St. Aldhelm.—Reign of Ina, the legislator, victor, and pacificator of the Britons; restorer of the Celtic sanctuary of Glastonbury, the first protector of St. Boniface.—In consequence of a surprise prepared for him by his wife, he goes to Rome as a penitent to die, and founds the *Schola Saxonum* there.—Crowd of Anglo-Saxon pilgrims of both sexes to Rome.—Abuses and disorders.—False monks and false pilgrims.—The age of gold a chimera in the Church as elsewhere.

"Must lose
The name of king? O' God's name, let it go.
I'll give my jewels for a set of beads,
My gorgeous palace for a hermitage;
My gay apparel for an almsman's gown;

My figured goblets for a dish of wood;
My sceptre for a palmer's walking staff;
My subjects for a pair of carved saints;
And my large kingdom for a little grave,
A little, little grave, an obscure grave."
—SHAKESPEARE, *Richard II.*

BEDE dedicated his *History of the English* to the king of his dear Northumbria, Ceolwulf, whose tender solicitude for monastic interests made him hope for an approaching reform of the abuses of ecclesiastical government in the north of England.[1] But two years after the death of the great monastic historian, Ceolwulf himself became a monk. He was of the race of Ida the Burner, sprung, however, from another branch than that from which came all those descendants of Ethelfrid the Ravager, whose connection with Aïdan and Wilfrid, Hilda and Ebba, Lindisfarne and Melrose, has already occupied us so long.

The line of Ethelfrid had come to a sad conclusion in that young Osred, who came to the throne during the last struggles of Wilfrid, and whom the people had taken pleasure in regarding as the adopted son of the great bishop.[2] Far from walking in the footsteps of his father Aldfrid and his grandfather Oswy, he has left no trace of sympathy with the institutions and ideas represented among the Anglo-Saxons by the monks. From an early age he manifested all the inclinations of a tyrant, abandoning himself to frequent explosions of wild passion, which show only too clearly how hard was the task of the doctors and ministers of Christian purity among the Teutonic races. It was the delight of his precocious and impetuous libertinism to outrage virgins consecrated to the Lord, and he went from monastery to monastery to seek his sacrilegious prey.[3] On

[1] "Pro insita sibi dilectione pietatis, quicquid ad regulam pietatis pertinet, firma protinus intentione adjuvare curabit."—*Epist. ad Egbertum*, c. 5.

[2] See above, p. 93.

[3] "Osredum spiritus luxuriæ fornicantem et per monasteria nonnarum

the other hand, he obliged the nobles whom he oppressed, when he deigned to spare their lives in his massacres, to be shaven, and to bury themselves against their will in the cloisters.[1] A violent death put a stop to his evil ways.

But already the star of Northumbria had paled beyond remedy. The final erection of the great northern bishopric of York into a metropolis, to which all the bishoprics north of the Humber were to be subject, was not sufficient to restore to Northumbria the power which she had exercised under kings like Oswald and Oswy and bishops like Aïdan and Wilfrid. Egbert, the Bishop of York, the correspondent of Bede, and a prince of the reigning dynasty, obtained from Pope Gregory II., after repeated requests, the re-establishment of the metropolitan dignity, which had been at first bestowed upon the see of York by St. Gregory the Great, but which, since the flight of Paulinus, had fallen into disuse, and which the later decrees of Popes Vitalianus and Agathon had seemed to sacrifice to the supremacy of Canterbury. This restoration, however, was of advantage only to the splendour of the new metropolis, and in no way to the kingdom of which it was the capital, as indeed the authority of Canterbury, so long universal and always un-

sacratas virgines stuprantem et furentem agitavit, usquequo ipse gloriosum regnum et juvenilem vitam et ipsam luxuriosam animam contemptibili et despecta morte perdidit."—S. BONIFACII *Epist.* 59 *ad Ethelbaldum.* "Turpem vitam sanctimonialium stupris exagitans."—GUILL. MALMESBUR., i. 53.

[1] "Non proceres veneratus erat: non denique Christum.
Hic igitur multos miseranda morte peremit.
Ast alios cogit summo servire parenti,
Inque monasterii attonsos consistere septis. . . .
Anglorum proceres nimium trucidante tyranno
Servitium Domini miles præfatus inibat."

—ETHELWOLFI, *Carmen de Abbatibus et Viris Piis Lindisfarnens.*, c. 2 and 4. Mabillon (*Act. SS. O. S. B.*, t. iv. p. 317), in publishing this poem proved that, notwithstanding its title, this was not the great Monastery of Lindisfarne of which we have so largely spoken, but another monastery of the same name, founded by Duke Eadmund, "dux nobilis natu et moribus," one of those whom King Osred forced to become monks.

disputed, had not given the slightest supremacy over the rest of the Heptarchy to the kings of Kent.

After two obscure reigns, Ceolwulf attempted in vain to struggle against the disorder and decadence of his country. He was vanquished, and made captive by enemies whose names are not recorded, and had to submit, as happened to more than one Merovingian prince, to receive the tonsure by compulsion, and was shut up in a convent. He escaped, however, regained the crown, and reigned for some time in a manner which gained the applause of Bede, and weighed with the Pope in his decision in respect to the metropolis of York. But, after a reign of eight years, a regret, or an unconquerable desire, for that monastic life which had been formerly forced upon him against his will, seized him. He made the best provisions possible for the security of his country, and for a good understanding between the spiritual and temporal authorities, nominating as his successor a worthy prince of his race, the brother of Archbishop Egbert. Then giving up the cares of power, and showing himself truly the master of the wealth he resigned, he cut his long beard, had his head shaved in the form of a crown, and retired to bury himself anew at Lindisfarne, in the chief monastic sanctuary of his country. He there passed the last thirty years of his life in study and happiness.[1] He had, while king, enriched this monastery with many great gifts, and obtained permission for the use of wine and beer for monks who, up to that time, according to the rigid rule of ancient Catholic discipline, had been allowed no beverage but water and milk.

His successor, Eadbert, followed his example. After having, during a reign of twenty-one years, victoriously contended against the Picts, Scots, Mercians, and Welsh—

[1] "Vere beatus et litterarum scientia sufficienter constitutus."—GUILL. MALMESBUR., i. 64. "Sponte divitiarum non servus, sed dominus, quasi magnus viles abjecit."—HENRI HUNTINGD., *Hist.*, l. iv. p. 340. "Barbam deposuit, coronam accepit."—SIMEON DUNELM., *De Gest. Reg.*, pp. 69 and 139, ap. TWYSDEN, vol. i.

after having received presents and offers of alliance from the first of the Carlovingians, Pepin the Short,—he became a monk at York, where he had already founded what was then called a very noble library, and where he enrolled himself among the monks who constituted the clergy of his brother the archbishop's metropolis. He lived there for two years, preferring, says an annalist, the service of God to all the kingdoms of the earth, and rapt by his violent love for the celestial country.[1] Care has been taken to prove that he received the Roman tonsure, that of St. Peter, and not that of the Celts, which is the last mention in history of a difference which, a century earlier, had stirred up so many tempests.[2]

These two kings of Northumbria were not the first or only ones who embraced monastic life. Eadbert, indeed, is the eighth pointed out by English chroniclers as having preferred the eight beatitudes of voluntary poverty to the grandeurs of this world.[3] Certain annalists even go so far as to count more than thirty kings or queens of the different Anglo-Saxon kingdoms who entered the new cloisters during the seventh and eighth centuries.[4]

What transformation had thus passed upon those heathens, savage descendants of Odin, impetuous and bloody chieftains of a race which breathed only war and pillage, and knew no greater shame than to die a peaceful death! We see them penetrated by the spirit of gentleness and concord, seeking union, fraternity, even equality, and that sometimes with the humblest of their subjects, under the Benedictine habit, in the nightly chant of psalms, in the peaceful labours of agri-

[1] SIM. DUNELM., *Hist. Dunelm. Eccles.*, l. ii. c. 3.

[2] "Dei amoris causa et cœlestis patriæ violentia, accepta S. Petri tonsura."—*App. ad Bedam.*, ann. 758.

[3] "Qui pro regno temporali commutaverunt æternum, ut octo beatitudinum jucunditatem, quæ voluntariæ paupertati debetur, pro futuro haberent in cœlis."—RICH. CIRENC., p. 242. Mabillon counts eight before Eadbert, who is the ninth on his list.—*Act. SS. O. S. B.*, vol. iii. p. 463.

[4] STEVENS, continuation of DUGDALE, vol. i. p. 19.

culture or of the monastic library. They sought, they aspired to that retreat, as the crown of their warlike exploits and their political and military career. But it was little to the satisfaction of the Anglo-Saxons to see themselves thus abandoned by their kings. The spirit of proud independence which made them, like all the other Teutonic nations, so often rebellious and intractable, did not expel from their minds a passionate affection, or rather a mysterious worship, for the old blood of the first chiefs of the conquest. They made vain efforts to keep their kings back from the cloister, and reserved to themselves the right of reclaiming them by their own will or against it, in order to put them at the head of the army, and march against the enemy under their orders. Such was the fate, as has been seen,[1] of King Sigebert of East Anglia, the first of the Anglo-Saxons who entered the cloister, and who, torn from his cell by his desperate subjects to lead them against the pitiless Penda, ended his life, like so many of his heathen ancestors, on the field of battle.

Each of the dynasties of the Heptarchy furnished in succession its contingent to the new army. Like the Uffings of East Anglia, and the descendants of the Man of Fire in Northumberland, the children of the god Saxnote, whom the baptized Saxons[2] were made to abjure along with the gods Thor and Woden, had also their tonsured king. This race reigned over the Saxons of the East, whom King Sebbi had the happiness of bringing back to the faith, after their first defection.[3] The same king, who had reigned for thirty years as a faithful soldier of the King of kings, obtained, not without difficulty, the consent of his wife to enable him to assume before he died the monastic dress for which he had long sighed. But though he thus believed himself to have become a monk indeed, this descendant of Scandinavian gods and heroes, with the heart of a king under his monastic

[1] Vol. iii. p. 346. [2] LAPPENBERG, p. 114.
[3] See vol. iii. p. 358.

robe, feared, according to Bede, that, dying in his bed, he might seem to be overcome by suffering.[1] In the anguish of his last illness, he trembled lest, while struggling against the terrors of death, pain might tear from him cries or gestures unworthy of him. For this reason he would have no spectator of his last moments except the bishop of London. This prelate, who had invested him with the monk's black robe, had the consolation of seeing him give up his last sigh in perfect peace, and buried him in his own monastic cathedral of St. Paul, where, for a thousand years, until the time of the great fire which consumed that famous edifice under Charles II., was to be seen the immense stone coffin which contained the body of the monk-king, whose frame must have been as gigantic as his heart was manful.[2]

Fifteen years after the death of Sebbi, his successor and and grandnephew, King Offa, imitated his example while still in the fulness of youth and all delights. Though a man beloved and sought after by all, he gave up his betrothed bride, his family, country, and crown, and, resisting the passionate remonstrances of his subjects, went away to embrace monastic life, not even in an English cloister, but at Rome. The young Offa was accompanied in his pilgrimage and sacrifice by Coenred, the king of the Mercians, detached on his side from the world by witnessing the last moments of one of his best knights,[3] who died in despair from having

[1] "Vitam privatam et monachicam cunctis regni divitiis et honoribus præferens, quam et olim jam, si non obstinatus conjugis animus divortium negaret, subiisset. . . . Cumque annos triginta in regno miles regni cœlestis exegisset . . . habitum religionis, quem diu desiderabat, accepit. . . . Correptus infirmitate maxima, timere cœpit homo animi regalis ne ad mortem veniens, tanto affectus dolore, aliquid indignum suæ personæ vel ore proferret vel aliorum motu gereret membrorum."—BEDE, iv. 11.

[2] Note by Smith in his edition of Bede. "This is the first example I know of the devout idea so general, in later ages, of dying in the dress of a monk."—FLEURY, l. xi. c. 3.

[3] "Vir in laico habitu atque officio militari positus."—BEDE, v. 13. William of Malmesbury calls him "miles."—*Gest. Reg. Angl.*. l. i. c. 78. Turner proves that the order of knighthood existed among the Anglo-Saxons long before the Norman conquest."—*Hist. of Anglo-Saxons*, book viii. c. 12.

voluntarily kept back from confession.[1] Before leaving England, they were both present at the last act of the great Wilfrid's apostolic life—the dedication of the new monastery of Evesham, which they had endowed and freed from all temporal jurisdiction.[2] When they arrived at Rome, both these kings received the tonsure and cowl from the hands of Pope Constantinus, before the Confession of St. Peter, and, after some years of penitent life, they passed from the tomb of the apostles to celestial blessedness, to enjoy the society of the saints for ever.[3]

Since the death of the last Northumbrian Bretwalda, Oswy, and especially since the overthrow of his son Egfrid in his struggle with the Picts, Mercia had acquired the ascendancy which was departing from Northumbria. The Mercians, under the warlike descendants of the terrible Penda,[4] and thanks to the military spirit which inspired its people and race, swayed the Anglo-Saxon Heptarchy for nearly a century. Coenred, who died a monk at Rome

[1] The vision of this knight may be read in Bede, *loc. cit.* Two other passages in Bede (iii. 22 and v. 10) seem to prove that in his time the word "miles" was applied not only to all fighting men, but to nobles or patricians.

[2] See above, p. 105.

[3] "Coinred qui regno Merciorum nobilissime tempore aliquanto præfuit, nobilius multo sceptra regni reliquit . . . monachus factus ad limina Apostolorum, in precibus, jejuniis, et eleemosynis, usque ad diem permansit ultimum. . . . Offa juvenis amantissimæ ætatis et venustatis, totæque suæ genti ad tenenda servandaque regni sceptra exoptatissimus . . . reliquit uxorem, agros, cognatos et patriam, attonsus et in monachico vitam habitu complens, ad visonem beatorum apostolorum in cœlis diu desideratam pervenit."—BEDA, *Hist. Eccles.*, v. 19.

[4] See in the Appendix the table of his monastic descendants. The line of Mercian kings after Penda is as follows :—

626–655. Penda.
656–675. Wulphere, son of Penda.
675–704. Ethelred, brother of Wulphere.
704–709. Coenred, son of Wulphere.
709–716. Coelred, son of Ethelred.
716–757. Ethelbald, called *Clito*, grandson of a brother of Penda.
757–797. Offa, great-grandson of the same.

It is well known that among the Merovingians it was often the eldest

after having fought valiantly against the Britons, was Penda's grandson; and he was far from being the only recruit which the family of the dauntless champion of old paganism was to furnish to the monastic order. His own son, and second successor, Ethelred, the predecessor of Coenred upon the throne of Mercia, touched by divine grace, after a long and warlike reign, entered as a simple monk into the monastery of Bardeney, which he had founded, and ruled it for ten years as abbot before he died the death of a saint.[1] This is the Ethelred with whom we have already made acquaintance, first as the enemy and then as the devoted friend of Wilfrid,[2] whose cause he sustained with all the authority conferred on him by his double rank as monk and monarch.

These two kings, however, who were so entirely devoted to the Benedictine institution as to enrol themselves in it till the end of their worthy existence, were succeeded on the throne of Mercia by a prince of a very different stamp. Ceolred, like the young Northumbrian king of whom we recently spoke, did not content himself with despising the rights and liberties guaranteed to the monasteries by the charters of his predecessors; he took from them the young and beautiful virgins there consecrated to the Lord, for the gratification of his own passions. He died in one of his orgies among his earls, not only unrepentant, but calling upon the devil, and cursing the Christian priests with their Gospel.[3] It was perhaps the last outbreak of conquered

or most popular prince of the reigning dynasty who succeeded to the crown, to the injury of the direct heir, who might regain his rights at a later period if he lived long enough to see the question of the succession once more opened.

[1] "Omnipotentis benignitate visitatus fit monachus."—HENRIC. HUNTINGD., *Hist.*, l. iv. p. 337.

[2] See above, p. 91.

[3] "In stupratione et adulterio nonnarum commorans . . . nam Ceolredum prædecessorem tuum stupratorem sanctimonialium et ecclesiasticorum privilegiorum fractorem splendide cum suis comitibus epulantem spiritus malignus invasit . . . sine pœnitentia et confessione, furibundus

heathenism: not, certainly, that heathen morals and lusts were for ever extirpated from the bosom of these wild races, but since that time their ascendancy has never been so great as to lead an Anglo-Saxon prince to the point of making a public denial of the Gospel.

After this worthy grandson of the savage Penda, the Mercian throne fell to a collateral scion of the race, Ethelbald, known under the name of *Clito* or *Childe*, which was then used among the Anglo-Saxons, as that of *Infanto* in Spain at a later period, to designate the princes of the reigning dynasty. Ethelbald, who was savagely pursued by Ceolred, had a stormy and hard youth. He was not himself a monk, but his history is connected with that of one of the most holy and popular monks of the eighth century.[1] In the course of his wanderings from province to province and from stronghold to stronghold, while flying with some devoted companions from the persecution of his pitiless enemy, he learned that a young and warlike chief called Guthlac, sprung, like himself, from the royal race of Mercia, had retired from the world to consecrate himself to study and prayer, in an island surrounded by the marshes which then covered a great district on the borders of Mercia and East Anglia. Ethelbald put himself under the guidance of a neighbouring abbot, who knew the country sufficiently to find his way through the black and stagnant waters and

et cum diabolo sermocinans, et sacerdotes Dei abominans . . . ad tormenta inferni migravit."—S. BONIFACII, *Epist. ad Ethelbaldum Regem Mercionum*, n. 62, ed. Giles; 17, ed. Serrar.

[1] The learned and accurate Philippe Jaffé, the last editor of the *Epistles of St. Boniface*, believes King Ethelbald to have been in his youth a pupil of St. Aldhelm. He attributes to him the letter addressed to that holy abbot, which is published with those of St. Boniface (ed. Jaffé, No. 5) and those of Aldhelm (ed. Giles, p. 100). But the letter itself seems to prove that it is the work of a young ecclesiastic, and not of a prince unacquainted, as Ethelbald must have been, with the life of the cloister. It was very probably the same student to whom Aldhelm addressed the answer, a fragment of which we have quoted above at page 221 of this volume.

muddy soil of these inaccessible marshes, and the two reached Croyland in a fisher's boat. In this watery retreat abode the good and pious Guthlac, and there the fugitive found a hospitable welcome and a safe shelter. He did not continue long there: when rest had given him renewed confidence, he left the refuge in which Ceolred neither could nor dared reach him, to resume his life of adventure. But new dangers led him again and again to Croyland, where Guthlac always received him with the same affection, and lavished upon him, in their long and frequent conversations, the spiritual consolations and varied instruction which he needed. He had a cell beside that of Guthlac, his sole friend and consoler.[1] One day, returning from one of his dangerous journeys, during which he had found himself separated from all his followers, closely surrounded by enemies, and at the end of his strength and resources, he arrived exhausted and desperate, and threw himself into the arms of his protector and friend. "Dear child," said Guthlac, "I know all your troubles and misfortunes; I have followed your laborious career from its beginning; for this reason I have prayed God much for you, and He has granted my prayer. I announce to you in His name that you shall one day reign over your native country. You shall see the defeat of your enemies; you shall overcome them sword in hand; you shall trample them under your feet, and become the master of all their possessions. Learn only to wait: the kingdom will come to you, not by rapine and violence, but from the hand of God, when that hand shall have demolished the wicked man who now reigns, and who shall pass away like a shadow."[2] From that moment Ethelbald placed his hope

[1] "In quadam casula . . . Guthlaci qui solus refugium et consolatio laborum ipsius erat."—*Vita S. Guthl.*, c. 39.

[2] "Est in mediterraneorum Anglorum partibus immensæ magnitudinis sacerrima palus, nunc stagnis, nunc flactris, interdum nigris vaporibus et laticibus, necnon crebris insularum nemoribus intervenientibus, et flexuosis rivigarum anfractibus . . . protenditur. . . . Arrepta piscatoria scaphula. . . . Cum huc illucque . . . in diversis nationibus jactaretur

in God alone, and waited with trust and patience. The prophecy was accomplished two years after: Ceolred perished in his orgies,[1] and the *Childe* was immediately recognised as king by all the Mercians.

The hermit who with so much confidence prophesied to the future king of Mercia, sprang himself from the dynasty which reigned over the greater part of the Heptarchy.[2] His youth had been spent in fight and pillage, like that of all the princes and lords of his time. Excited by the recollection of the exploits of his ancestors, he dreamed only of battles and devastation, and at the head of a numerous band of friends and dependants he vanquished his enemies, sacked many towns and castles, and collected immense booty. But his companions observed with surprise that he had so much pity left as to restore to those whom he robbed a third part of their goods. He led this bandit life, which was supposed among his countrymen to be heroic, from the age of fifteen to that of twenty-four. But one night, while he camped with all his followers in a forest, his imagination suddenly presented before him the crimes, excesses, and miserable end of the kings of his race, then his own inevitable and perhaps approaching death, and the nothingness of the wealth and fame which he had sought. He felt himself as if burnt up by an internal flame—the flame of celestial desires. His decision was made on the spot. As soon

. . . usque ad præfatam insulam pervenit. . . . Alio die, deficiente virium ipsius valitudine, suorumque inter dubia pericula, postquam inanitæ vires defecere, tandem ad colloquium sancti viri Guthlaci, ut assolebat, pervenit. . . . O mi puer, laborum tuorum non sum expers, miseriarum tuarum ab exordio vitæ non sum inscius . . . misertus calamitatis tuæ rogavi Dominum ut subveniret tibi. . . . Tribuet tibi dominationem gentis tuæ. . . . Terga eorum videbis et gladius tuus vincet adversarios tuos."—*Vita S. Guthlaci, auctore* FELICE *monacho ejus æquali*, ap. *Acta SS. O. S. B.*, sæc. iii. pars 1, ad ann. 714.

[1] See above, p. 280.

[2] "Hujus viri progenies, per nobilissima illustrium regum nomina, antiqua ab origine Icles digesto ordine cucurrit."—*Vita.*, c. 4. This Icles was the fifth ancestor of the terrible Penda.

as the first song of the birds announced the dawn he awoke his comrades, and told them to choose another chief, as he had just devoted himself, for his own part, to the service of Jesus Christ. Then, in spite of their remonstrances, cries, and lamentations, he instantly set out, carrying with him only a broad and short sword, such as was worn by labourers.[1] Doubtless this was to defend himself during the long and solitary journey which he had before him; for he went alone, and far from his native district and his friends, to knock at the door of one of those double monasteries, governed by abbesses, several of which already existed in England, and where the humility of the monk was so much the more tried that he was subject to a woman as superior.[2] He there assumed the monastic habit, having his long hair cut, according to the form of the Roman, not the Celtic, tonsure, as his biographer takes pains to tell us. There he passed two years, dedicated to the study of the Holy Scriptures, of cenobitic customs, and of liturgical music.[3] At twenty-six his soul was illuminated by a new light while reading the life of the Fathers in the desert; he determined to plunge into a deeper and more austere solitude, and it was then that he betook himself to the

[1] "Cum juvenili in pectore egregius dominandi amor fervesceret, valida priscorum heroum facta reminiscens. . . . Cum adversantium sibi urbes et villas, vicos et castella igne ferroque vastaret . . . tertiam partem agregatæ gazæ possidentibus remittebat. . . . Post tot prædas, cædes, rapinas . . . lassi quieverunt. . . . Quadam nocte . . . extemplo spiritualis flamma omnia præcordia viri incendere cœpit. . . . Antiquorum regum stirpis suæ per transacta sæcula miserabiles exitus et flagitiosum vitæ terminum contemplans . . . ecce subito . . . cum sol demoverat ortum, in quo matutinæ volucres avido forcipe pipant."—*Vita*, c. 10, 11.

[2] At Ripadun, or Repton, situated on the Trent. The name of the abbess was Elfrida. This abbey, where the kings of Mercia were buried, was destroyed by the Danes, and replaced under the Normans by a priory of regular canons.

[3] "Mysticam S. Petri apostolorum principis tonsuram accepit. . . . Sacris litteris et monasticis disciplinis erudiebatur . . . psalmis, canticis, orationibus precibusque ecclesiasticis per biennium imbutus."—*Vita*, c. 13.

marshy forests of Croyland. He found there an ancient *tumulus*, already excavated by the greed of the neighbouring population, who expected to find treasure there. They had dug it into a sort of pit. The fierce young Mercian prince fitted it with a penthouse of straw, made it his home, and there ended his life.

There are various features in this life which are to be found in those of the most illustrious saints of the monastic order. Like St. Benedict, Guthlac excited by his austerities the ill-will of his brethren. With true Anglo-Saxon spirit, they reproached him specially for his unalterable resolution never to drink either beer or hydromel, nor wine, except in the Communion.[1] Like St. Columba, his solitude was continually disturbed by crowds of the faithful, attracted by the increasing fame of his holiness, and who surmounted all the obstacles which Nature had heaped around his island retreat to seek light, consolation, and the healing of their infirmities; he was sought by all conditions of men from all quarters, abbots and earls, rich and poor, monks and laymen; and these not only from all parts of Mercia, but from the most distant corners of England.[2]

Like the Fathers of the desert, he was exposed to a thousand temptations, a thousand diabolical visions, the most curious of which, in a historical point of view, is that which makes it apparent that the Cambrian or British marauders were not afraid of crossing the whole breadth of the island to disturb their conquerors even in East Anglia. It is told that Guthlac was much comforted by discovering that the enemies by whom he had felt his cell to be surrounded and threatened all the night through, were demons

[1] "Non ullius inebriantis liquoris aut alicujus libaminis haustum. . . . Hac ex causa omnibus fratribus illic cohabitantibus aspero odio habebatur."—*Vita*, c. 12.

[2] "Inter densas arundinum compages . . . abbates, fratres, comites, divites, vexati, pauperes . . . confluebant. . . . Loca spinosa sine calle agresti rura gradiendo, inruit (quidam comes exsulis Ethelbaldi) in spinulam sub incultæ telluris herbis latentem."—*Vita*, c. 24, 31.

and not Welsh, as he had supposed them to be by their hoarse voices and guttural accents.[1]

Like many holy monks of Celtic countries and of Merovingian Gaul he lived in a close and touching familiarity with all living creatures, and especially with the birds who inhabited the trees and great reeds of his island. The crows served him with docility as messengers, the swallows came twittering to seat themselves on his shoulders or knees, on his head or breast; and he, on his side, built them nests with his own hands, little baskets made of rushes and bits of straw, which he placed under the thatch of his cell, and to which his gentle guests returned yearly, seeking their accustomed dwelling-places. "My father," said an astonished visitor, "how have you managed to give those daughters of solitude so much trust in you?" "Know you not," answered Guthlac, "that he who is united to God in purity of heart, sees in his turn all created things unite themselves to him? The birds of heaven, like the angels, seek those who do not seek the society of men."[2]

Like St. Romuald, he inspired the surrounding population with so much reverence for him, that speculations began to be made during his life on the price of his relics; the monk who came to him every twenty days to renew his tonsure thought seriously of using his razor to cut his throat, with the conviction that the place in which so great a saint

[1] "Cum Britones, infesti hostes Saxonici generis, bellis, prædis publicisque vastationibus Anglorum gentem deturbarent. . . . Quadam nocte . . . extra cellulam egressus, et erectis auribus adstans verba loquentis vulgi Britannicaque agmina tectis succedere agnoscit: nam ille . . . inter illos exsulabat, quoadusque eorum stridulentas loquelas intelligere valuit." —*Vita*, c. 20.

[2] "Velut magna lætitia avino forcipe flexuosi gutturis carmen canentes, veluti ad assuetas sedes . . . sese humeris viri Dei imposuerunt, ac deinde cantulis vocibus garrulentes. . . . Utquid incultæ solitudinis volucres. . . . Nonne legisti quia qui Deo puro spiritu copulabitur, omnia sibi in Deo conjunguntur, et qui ab hominibus cognosci denegat, agnosci a feris et frequentari ab angelis quærit?"—*Vita*, c. 25.

perished would be enriched by the veneration of kings and princes.[1]

And finally, like St. Cuthbert, he had a friend, a noble and pious abbess, daughter of the king of the East Anglians, who offered to him, in testimony of their mutual affection, a leaden coffin and a shroud.[2] He accepted these presents; and although he had vowed to wear neither woollen nor linen, but to dress himself entirely in the skins of beasts, he consented, for the love of Edburga, that his body should be buried in the linen which she had woven for him.[3] He died after a week of severe suffering, but having still strength enough to rise and say mass on the day of his death, and afterwards to take the holy viaticum himself from the altar. He was still young; and during the fifteen years which he had passed in these marshes had yet retained, in the midst of his austere solitude, that grave kindness and light-heartedness which are the inalienable inheritance of true monks and saints.[4]

On receiving news of the death of his friend, Ethelbald hastened to the body of him who so long protected his misfortune and consoled his misery. He threw himself, bathed in tears, on his knees before the coffin. "My father," he cried, "thou who hast known all my sufferings, and who hast sustained me in all dangers, as long as thou livedst I could never despair. Thanks to thee, I know how to call

[1] "Quidam clericus, nomino Beccelinus. . . . Cum, ut adsolebat, post bis denos dierum cursus tonderare devenisset . . . proponens ut si ipsum interimere potuisset, locum ipsius postea cum magna regum principumque venerantia habiturus foret."—*Vita*, c. 21.

[2] See above, p. 154.

[3] "Reverentissima virgo virginum Christi et sponsarum Egburga abbatissa, Aldulfi regis filia. . . . Nolui quidem juvenis ullo lineo tegmine corpus meum tegere, sed pro amore dilectæ Christi virginis, quæ hæc munera mihi mittebat."—*Vita*, c. 33, 35. Egburga or Edburga then governed the same monastery of Repton from which Guthlac had issued to shut himself up in Croyland.

[4] "Ut adsolebat hilari vultu secessit; nam semper gratia eximiæ charitatis in ore ipsius et vultu fulgebat."—*Ibid.*, c. 25.

upon the Lord, who hast saved me up to this day. But if thou forsakest me, to whom can I have recourse? who will help, who will comfort me?"

The following night, in the midst of his tears and prayers, Guthlac appeared to him, resplendent with light, to confirm his ancient prediction, and to announce the end of his trials.[1]

And in fact, two years after, Ethelbald succeeded to the throne of Mercia, which he occupied for forty years. The first use which he made of his power was to found a monastery at Croyland, in honour of him whom he continued to call his friend and consoler. Notwithstanding the difficulties involved in such a building, an immense abbey, richly endowed, and inhabited by a colony of monks brought from the new abbey of Evesham,[2] rose upon the site of his cell. Ethelbald built it in the midst of these stagnant waters, upon piles driven into a little heap of earth which was brought from a distance in boats, to solidify the marsh which the industry of the monks was soon to render wholesome, and transform into fertile meadows. Croyland was specially distinguished for the knowledge of its monks, and occupied for several centuries the first rank among English monasteries. The coffin of Guthlac, taken from the earth in which it was to have been buried, by the tenderness of Ethelbald, and richly decorated, formed the principal ornament of the great church built in stone, which replaced the modest wooden oratory where Ethelbald and Guthlac had prayed together. This church, often destroyed, was always rebuilt

[1] "Pater mi, tu scis miserias meas, tu semper adjutor mei fuisti, te vivente non desperabam in angustiis. . . . Hæc proloquens, se solo sternebat, et supplex orans crebris lacrymarum fluentis totum vultum rigavit. . . . Totam cellulam immensi luminis splendore circumfulgescere vidit. . . . Noli tristari, dies enim miseriæ tuæ præterierunt. . . . Nec illum fides fefellit: ex illo enim tempore usque in hodiernum diem infulata regni ipsius felicitas per tempora consequentia de die in diem crescebat." —*Vita*, c. 39.

[2] See above, p. 105, the foundation of this abbey by Bishop Egwin and its consecration by Wilfrid.

with increased magnificence; and its great bell, known as the largest and most harmonious in England, retained to its last day the name and recollection of the hermit whom its royal founder had so much loved.[1]

It would be pleasant to believe that Ethelbald showed himself always worthy of the tender sympathy with which his holy friend had honoured him in his youth. But this confidence is scarcely possible in presence of the famous and eloquent letter addressed to him by six English bishops, who were occupied during his whole reign in the work of evangelising Germany, and who had at their head the great Boniface. The holy apostle of the Germans went from England to the Continent the same year in which Ethelbald became king, and two years before the end of his reign he died the death of a martyr. The letter of the bishops informs us that the private conduct of the king awakened a religious and patriotic sorrow in those noble missionaries of Anglo-Saxon faith and glory. They accuse him, according to public report, of having sought in celibacy, not Christian mortification, but the satisfaction of his sensual instincts, and, in the effervescence of his passions, of respecting neither the domestic hearths of his fellow-citizens nor even the sanctuaries of virgins consecrated to God.[2] They remind

[1] "Sarcophagum non humo terræ condidit, immo in memoriale quod nunc ab Ethelbaldo rege miris ornamentorum structuris . . . ædificatum conspicimus. . . . Quia palustris humus lapideam molem sustinere non poterat, ingentes ex quercis palos innumeræ multitudinis humo infigi fecit, duramque terram . . . scaphis deferri et paludibus commisceri . . . ad honorem Dei et sancti anachoretæ quem valde dilexerat, pro dulci consolatione quam eo dum exsulabat multoties perceperat."—*Vita*, c. 37, 41. Some remains of the abbey church of Croyland still exist, but these are of the church built in the twelfth or fourteenth century. In the tympanum of the portal, in the western front, five medallions in bas-relief represent the principal incidents in the life of Guthlac—his arrival in the marsh of Croyland in a boat, his first interview with Ethelbald, his death, &c.

[2] "Quando aliqua injuria de statu regni vestri, vel eventu bellorum facta, aut quod majus est, de salute animæ periculosum damnum perpetratum per auditum usque ad nos pervenerit, mœrore et tristitia cruciamur. . . . Qui nobis narrant, adjiciunt quod hoc scelus maxime cum

him, in this respect, of the honour paid to chastity by their heathen ancestors, the Saxons of Germany, and the cruel penalties which were exacted for adultery. They entreat him not to dishonour his old age, not to encourage the English nation by his example to descend by debauchery to the level of the degenerate nations of Spain and the south of Europe, of whom the Saxons had already made a prey. They reproach him besides with having violated the charters and stolen the possessions of several monasteries, and with authorising the Mercian lords, by his example, to subject the monks and priests to violence and servitude, till then unknown in Christian England.[1]

On the other hand, these witnesses of imposing authority congratulate him highly on his charity to the poor, as well as on his zeal for the administration of justice, the protection of the weak, and the repression of local quarrels and disorders.

Other testimony informs us that he was a just, generous, and brave king; that, by his frequent and fortunate wars, the friend of Guthlac raised Mercia to a degree of power which it had never before reached, and that he was regarded as the supreme monarch of England up to the day on which, after a long and prosperous reign, he fell fighting against the West Saxons, in a struggle, the picturesque and impassioned narrative of which has been enshrined by popular poetry amid the historic annals of the period.[2]

The kingdom of the West Saxons, which was to inherit

sanctimonialibus et sacratis Deo virginibus per monasteria commissum sit. Audivimus præterea quod optimates pæne omnis gentis Merciorum tuo exemplo legitimas uxores deserant, et adulteras et sanctimoniales constuprent."—S. BONIFACII, *Epistolæ*, 59, ed. Jaffé.

[1] "Et dicitur quod præfecti et comites tui majorem violentiam et servitutem monachis et sacerdotibus irrogent, quam cæteri ante Christiani reges fecissent."—*Ibid.*

[2] HENRICUS HUNTINGDON, *Historia Anglorum*, l. iv. p. 341. The friend of Guthlac describes himself in a charter of 736, "Rex non solum Merciorum sed et omnium provinciarum quæ generali nomine Sut-Angli dicuntur;" and elsewhere, "Rex Britanniæ."

the power of the Mercians, as the latter had inherited that of the Northumbrians, was destined to absorb all the kingdoms of the Heptarchy, and thus to create that English unity which no dismemberment has ever broken up. The dynasty of the sons of Cerdic, reputed by tradition to be himself the ninth in descent from the god Odin, was to produce Egbert and the great Alfred. It prefaced these generous lives by giving three kings, one after another, to the monastic order, which already owed to it the holy and learned Abbot Aldhelm. He who opened the march in a career which was so novel to the sons of Odin, was Centwin, son of the first Christian king of Wessex,[1] who, after a brilliant and warlike reign of nine years, interspersed with battles between the Mercians and Britons, determined to end his days in one of the monasteries which he had founded and endowed.[2] After him it was the turn of Ceadwalla, the ferocious devastator of the Isle of Wight and the kingdoms of Kent and Sussex, who remained obstinately heathen, notwithstanding the conversion of his neighbours and his country, but who, all at once, at the age of thirty, recalling to his memory the instructions which he had received when himself in exile from the great exile Wilfrid,[3] abdicated his

[1] Cynegils, converted and presented for baptism by his son-in-law, Oswald of Northumbria. See vol. iii. p. 350.

[2] His history is scarcely known to us, except through the verses of Aldhelm addressed to his daughter Bugga, who is perhaps the same as the abbess of that name to whom Boniface addressed several of his epistles:—

"Hoc templum Bugge pulchro molimine structum,
Nobilis erexit Centwini filia regis,
Qui prius imperium Saxonum rite regebat,
Donec præsentis contemnens culmina regni,
Divitias mundi rerumque reliquit habenas;
Plurima basilicis impendens rura novellis
Quæ nunc christicolæ servant monastica jura. . . .
Exin sacratam perrexit quærere vitam,
Dum proprium linquit Christi pro nomine regnum. . . .
Donec conversus cellam migravit in almam."
—Ed. Giles, p. 117.

[3] See above, p. 55.

crown, crossed the sea, the Alps, and Lombardy, and appeared at Rome, the first of the Anglo-Saxon kings, as Wilfrid, thirty years before, had been the first monastic pilgrim of the same race who had visited the Eternal City. He asked baptism from Pope Sergius, who conferred upon him the name of Peter, in memory of the great devotion which had brought him from so great a distance to the tomb of the prince of the apostles. Ten days later, before he had even laid aside the white robe of the catechumens, he died. The Pope gave orders that he should be buried in St. Peter's, and inscribed upon his tomb an epitaph in tolerable verse, intended to stir up the zeal of future generations by the example of the young and formidable victor, who had given up everything that he and his father had conquered or hoarded up, and abjured his barbarous religion to become the humble godson of St. Peter, and who had gone clothed with the whiteness of baptism to increase in heaven the flock of Christ.[1]

The crown of the West Saxons passed after him to Ina, the friend of St. Aldhelm, as Ceadwalla had been the friend of Wilfrid. His long and prosperous reign laid the foundations of the future ascendancy of his race over all England. Though very warlike and very fortunate in war, the conqueror of the Southern and Eastern Saxons, he owes

[1] "Culmen, opes, sobolem, pollentia regna, triumphos,
Exuvias, proceres, mœnia, castra, lares:
Quæque patrum virtus, et quæ congesserat ipse,
Cædival armipotens, liquit amore Dei,
Ut Petrum sedemque Petri rex cerneret hospes. . . .
Barbaricam rabiem, nomen et inde suum
Conversus convertit ovans. . . .

"Urbem Romuleam vidit, templumque verendum
Aspexit, Petri mystica dona gerens.
Candidus inter oves Christi sociabilis ibit:
Corpore nam tumulum, mente superna tenet:
Commutasse magis sceptrorum insignia credas,
Quem regnum Christi promeruisse vides."
—Apud BEDE, v. 7.

his fame specially to the code of laws which he gave to his people, and which has been preserved in its integrity, like the laws given a century before by Ethelbert of Kent, with the help of the Roman missionaries.[1] Ina drew out his under the inspiration, and with the aid, of the two monk-bishops of Winchester and of London,[2] of his earls, and all the wise men (*witan*) who composed the parliament of his three kingdoms, and besides, according to his own declaration, with the help of many monks or servants of God, in order to provide for the salvation of souls and the prosperity of his people. Among these laws may be remarked some which guarantee the inviolability of marriage, and the sanctity of betrothal; consecrate the right of asylum in churches; improve the condition of the peasants, while maintaining their feudal thraldom to the soil of their lords; provide for the support of their widows and orphans; forbid the exportation of slaves, and declare free of all bondage the slave who should be compelled by his master to work on Sunday.[3]

He pursued with energy the struggle with the Britons of Wales, and finally succeeded in incorporating into his kingdom those of Cornwall, dethroning the king of that province, to whom Aldhelm had addressed his famous letter upon the Celtic Easter.[4] But Ina, who was himself born of a Celtic mother, consulting at once the precepts of Christian

[1] *Dooms of Ina*, ap. THORPE, *Ancient Laws and Institutes of England*, p. 45.

[2] Hedda, the friend and predecessor of Aldhelm and Erconwald.

[3] "Ego Ine Dei gratia West-Saxonum rex, exhortatione et doctrina. . . . Heddæ episcopi mei . . . et omnium Aldermannorum meorum et seniorum et sapientum regni mei, multaque congregatione servorum Dei, sollicitus de salute animarum nostrarum et de statu regni mei, constitui rectum conjugium et justa judicia pro stabilitate et confirmatione populi mei benigna sedulitate celebrari. . . . Si servus operetur dominica die per præceptum domini sui, sit liber: si liber operetur illa die sine jussu domini sui, perdat libertatem suam."—Latin text in the Chronicle of John of Brompton, ap. TWYSDEN, *Script. Ang.*, i. 761.

[4] See above, p. 233.

morality and the well-understood interests of his nation, completed the pacification of the conquered population by guaranteeing the validity of marriages contracted between Saxons and Britons, and entered into relations with the Celts of Armorica.[1] He rebuilt and endowed magnificently the national sanctuary of the Britons at Glastonbury,[2] consecrating to this work of conciliation the thirty thousand pounds of silver which he had torn, sword in hand, from the Jutes of Kent, on account of *were*, or compensation for the life of a West Saxon prince whom they had burned alive.[3] He thus testified the veneration of the Saxon conquerors for the celebrated monastery which, after having been the cradle of Celtic Christianity,[4] and the tomb of King Arthur, was about to become one of the principal centres of Anglo-Saxon monachism, and one of the burying-places of English royalty. It is the sole example in Great Britain of a religious foundation which has become equally dear and sacred to the two races—to the victors as to the vanquished.

With the help of the princes and patricians of his own country, Ina founded or enriched many other monasteries,[5] being specially guided in his good works by the most illustrious abbot in Wessex, his friend and cousin Aldhelm, whom he had drawn from the cloister of Malmesbury to

[1] Judicial tradition noticed by LAPPENBERG, p. 258.

[2] See vol. ii. p. 382. Henschen, the learned and conscientious Bollandist, after having quoted two apocryphal charters of Ina in favour of Glastonbury, in vol. i. of February, pp. 907, 908, has acknowledged and proclaimed the falsehood of the articles in vol. ii. of April, p. 31. He adds modestly: "Si eadem, quæ nunc Aprilem absolventibus, adfuisset scientia Februarium tractantibus, explodi ista potuissent."

[3] *Chron. Anglo-Sax.*, ad. ann. 687 and 694. LINGARD, *History*, p. 161.

[4] See vol. ii. pp. 383 and 403.

[5] See details on the part he took in the foundation of Abingdon, given in the *Chronicon Monasterii de Abingdon*, c. 12, 13, newly published by J. Stevens in the *Rerum Britannic. Scriptores*. In an assembly held in 704, he confirmed the monasteries of Wessex in their charters and possessions by a deed signed by all the *principes, senatores, judices, et patricii*.—KEMBLE, *Cod. Diplomat.*, n. 50 and 51.

make him a bishop, and whose counsels he followed with affectionate docility.[1]

And, finally, thanks to Ina, at the moment when Aldhelm disappeared from the scene, one of the most illustrious of the saints whom England has given to the Church rises on our sight, the great Winefred, whose youth was spent in a monastery in Wessex, from which Ina took him to intrust him with certain delicate negotiations with the Archbishop of Canterbury.[2] This is the first appearance in history of him who was to be the victor over Teutonic heathenism, the true Christian conqueror of Germany, and whose name, latinised into Boniface, is inscribed in ineffaceable characters in history along with those of Charles Martel and of Charlemagne.

While Ina was still in full possession of his power and popularity,[3] after thirty-seven years of a prosperous and glorious reign, his wife, Ethelburga, in whose veins, as in his own, ran the warlike blood of Cerdic, and who had shared all the cares of his life even to the point of victoriously leading his people to battle in his absence, persuaded him to give up his throne and the world. According to narratives which unfortunately are not given us by contemporaries, but which are in conformity with the characteristic conditions of Anglo-Saxon nature, the queen's device for deciding Ina to the sacrifice which she meant to make along with him, was after the following fashion:—A great banquet, accompanied by all the refinements of lordly luxury in these days, had been given in one of the royal *villas*. Next morning the princely pair set out on their journey, but after riding for an hour or two the queen begged her husband to return whence they came. He consented, and on returning to the castle he was struck with consternation to find the

[1] "Adfuit pater Aldhelmus cujus ille præcepta audiebat humiliter, suscipiebat granditer, adimplebat hilariter."—*De Regib.*, lib. i. c. 2.

[2] S. WILLEBALDI, *Vita S. Bonifacii*, c. 4.

[3] "Sine alto insidiarum metu securus incanuit, sanctissimus amoris publici lenocinator."—GUILL. MALMESB., *loc. cit.*

scene of the recent rejoicings not only silent and desert, but destroyed and desecrated. It was covered with ruins and filth, and the very bed on which they had slept was occupied by a sow with her litter. The astonished king looked at the queen, who had given secret orders to this effect to the steward of the villa, for an explanation. "Yes, my lord husband," said Ethelburga, "where are now our yesterday's pleasures? where are our purple hangings, our gay parasites, our heavy silver dishes and delicate meats? All has passed away like smoke, and those who prize such pleasures shall pass away like them. Behold, then, I pray you, into what misery falls this flesh which we feed so delicately; and we who are fed still more daintily than other men, shall not we fall into a still more miserable corruption?"[1]

This was enough, according to the legend, to determine the king to think only for the future of his soul. Authentic history proves his abdication, which was given in the midst of a Parliament of Witan, to whom he announced his resolution to pass the rest of his days in penitence.[2] Then, accompanied by Ethelburga, he went to Rome. He arrived there after a long and painful journey, to end his life in penitence and obscurity. According to some accounts, he embraced monastic life according to the rule of St. Benedict;[3] according to others, he preferred, for humility's sake, to remain lost in the crowds of poor pilgrims, with neither tonsure nor cowl, gaining his livelihood by the work of his hands.[4]

[1] "Villicus ex reginæ conscientia . . . in lecto ubi cubuerant porcam noviter enixam collocat . . . Regis oculi ad mulierem rediere. Et ubi sunt, ait, domine conjux, hesterni strepitus? . . . Nonne nos qui ingurgitamur uberius, putrescemus miserius? . . . Maritum compulit in sententiam exemplo, quam multis annis frustra insusurraverat verbo."—GUILL. MALMESB., *loc. cit.*

[2] LINGARD, i. 162.

[3] *Act. SS. Bolland.*, t. i. Febr., p. 913. MABILLON, *Act. SS. O. S. B.*, t. iii. p. 465.

[4] GUILL. MALMESB., *loc. cit.* "Dux fœmina facti," adds the monastic historian, steeped like all his fellows in the recollections of classical antiquity.

Upon the left bank of the Tiber, then almost desert, and not far from the Vatican, the lawgiver and king founded, under the name of *Schola Saxonum*, an establishment for the orthodox education of young princes, and for the priests and clerks of his country who desired to complete their religious and literary education in the shadow of the basilica of St. Peter.[1] He added to this a church and burying-ground specially intended for his countrymen, and in which he was himself buried, for he died in Rome in the obscurity he had voluntarily sought. His faithful Ethelburga remained with him till his death, and then returning, became a nun in England.

The great Benedictine Wilfrid had set the example of these pilgrimages to Rome, which nobody had thought of before his time.[2] Some years after his death it became a kind of epidemic. During the seventh and eighth centuries Rome was the meeting-place of innumerable pilgrims, who came from all quarters of the West to see the holy city, and pray by the tombs of the saints and martyrs. By no nation was this pious duty accomplished with greater zeal and fervour than by the Anglo-Saxons. Their kings set them the example,[3] differing in that point from the Merovingians, not a single individual of whom ever crossed the Alps to go to Rome.

An irresistible attraction to the Eternal City soon became apparent among Saxons of all ranks; princes and bishops,

[1] It was transformed by Innocent III. into an hospital, which has become, under the title of *S. Spirito in vico de Sassia*, the most celebrated in Rome. Other traditions attribute this important foundation to young Offa of Essex, who also died a monk at Rome (RICHARD DE CIRENCESTER, p. 229, ed. Mayor), or, again, to the powerful Offa, king of Mercia, who died in 796, and will be referred to further on. In any case, the latter was a great benefactor of the national foundation in Rome, the doors of which he opened to students of all countries. "Ut ibidem peregrini . . . ex diversis mundi partibus barbari . . . linguas quas non noverint, addiscerent."—MATTH. PARIS, *in Vitis Abbatum S. Albani*, c. 1.

[2] See vol. iii. p. 377.

[3] Lingard counts as many as eight kings, including, however, Ethelwulf and Canute, who belong to a later period.—*Antiquities*, i. 116.

rich and poor, priests and laity, men and women, undertook the pilgrimage with eagerness, often going so far as to repeat the journey notwithstanding its difficulties and dangers.[1] They were so numerous that, collecting round the foundation of King Ina, they gave their name to an entire quarter of the city, the *Vicus Saxonum*,[2] situated in the immediate neighbourhood of St. Peter's, and inhabited exclusively by them. They came, says their historian, to make acquaintance in their lifetime with the saints, by whom they hoped to be well received in heaven.

But as there were false monks who introduced even into the cloister the indolence and vices of worldly life, so there were also false pilgrims whom frivolous or guilty motives carried abroad; and the monastic writers have remarked the one as well as the other. The wandering inclination of the Teutonic races may well have contributed, after the first impulse of fervent and sincere piety, to increase the number of those undevout pilgrims who often scandalised by their conduct the Christian countries through which they travelled. Women especially, and even virgins consecrated to God, excited the just indignation of the priests and the faithful in France and Italy, by their licence and lamentable downfalls, during their journeys to Rome. The melancholy revelations transmitted by the great apostle of Germany on this point to his colleague and countryman, Bishop Cuthbert of Canterbury, which led the latter to request the English assemblies and princes to forbid absolutely the pilgrimages of women and nuns to Rome, will not bear repetition.[3]

[1] "Cupiens in vicinia sanctorum locorum ad tempus peregrinari in terris, quo familiarius a sanctis recipi mereretur in cœlis; quod his temporibus plures de gente Anglorum, nobiles, ignobiles, laici, clerici, viri ac feminæ certatim facere consuerunt."—BEDE, v. 7.

[2] From whence comes the name *Sassia*, still preserved in this part of Rome.

[3] "Aliquod levamentum turpitudinis esset, si prohiberent synodus et principes vestri mulieribus et velatis feminis illud iter et frequentiam, quam ad Romanam civitatem veniendo et redeundo faciunt; quia magna ex parte pereunt, paucis remanentibus integris. Perpaucæ enim sunt

I shall have succeeded poorly in expounding the history of these times, and ill served the truth, if the reader has not been struck by the singular mixture of good and evil, peace and war, freedom and slavery, which, from the beginning of Anglo-Saxon Christianity, shows itself in all the relations between society and the Church. It is evident that goodness had the advantage over evil, but that the evil was formidable, the dangers continual and flagrant, the deceivers and ill-doers more numerous than the saints. This, notwithstanding, has been called the *Golden Age* of religion in England; not without reason, if the name has been given by comparison with later periods, but wrongly if attributed solely to its real merits. The fact is, that in true history there is no golden age. All ages, without exception, are infected by the evil which proceeds from man's natural corruption. All bear witness to his incurable weakness, but at the same time all proclaim his greatness and freedom, as well as the justice and mercy of God, his Maker and Redeemer.

civitates in Longobardia, vel in Francia, vel in Gallia, in qua non sit adultera vel meretrix generis Anglorum: quod scandalum est et turpitudo totius Ecclesiæ."—S. BONIFACII, *Epist. ad. Cuthbertum archiepiscopum.*

BOOK XIV

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL INFLUENCE OF THE MONKS AMONG THE ANGLO-SAXONS

The conversion and religious organisation of England entirely the work of monks.—Their patience and perseverance; letter of Bishop Daniel to the missionary Boniface; no violence; mildness and toleration.—Their influence over the nature they had converted; evil survives, but the good outweighs it.—Alliance between the Church and secular society, without the exclusive preponderance of either.—These apostolic monks were no longer fathers of the desert, but the creators of a Church and nation.—Towns grow up around the great communities.—The monasteries give rise to cathedrals and parishes.—Propagation of the Benedictine order.—Protection assured to the monastic order by the Councils of Beccancelde and Cloveshove.—Religious instruction in the national tongue.—Musical liturgy.—Crosses in the open air.—Services rendered to education by monasteries and monastic bishops.—St. John of Beverley.—Fondness of the Anglo-Saxon students for horsemanship.—Services rendered to agriculture.—Position of the monks as landlords.—Close alliance between the monastic order and the Anglo-Saxon aristocracy.—Intervention in political matters.—Their place in the national councils.—Authority, composition, and powers of these councils.—The distinction between the temporal and spiritual is not forgotten.—Influence of monks in these assemblies, and through them on laws and manners.—They contribute to the formation of that national unity which, since the ninth century, has never been disturbed.—Their devotion to the cause of the poor; expiation for the sins of the rich gives rise to public almsgiving.—Their zeal for the liberation of slaves; contest between an archbishop and an abbot for a young captive.—The rights of man as well as those of God vindicated by the monks throughout the history of their conquest of England.—Religion is too often left defenceless, but her ministers respect honour and the freedom of thought in regard to the things of God.—The monastic missionaries perfect the national character without changing it; the spirit of the Saxon still lives in modern England; modern liberty, self-government, and parliamentary rule are

rooted in the Saxon times.—Conformity of monastic rules with the tone of Anglo-Saxon institutions.—Splendour and prodigality of the aristocracy. —Motives of their gifts.—Abuse of their grants of land.—*Folc-land* and *boc-land*.—Monastic possessions exempt from military service and from taxes.—Public danger remarked by Bede.—Repression of many abuses by the Council of Cloveshove; it decrees against monastic luxury and wealth, and against the false ideas prevalent as to almsgiving.—The monastic riches arising from the munificence of kings and nobles soon excite envy; fluctuations and oppressions noticed by St. Boniface; necessity of a limit which might be imposed by the Church herself on the increase of monastic possessions.—Their value forms a pretext for spoliation and heresy.— Lacordaire and Mabillon.—A Spanish Benedictine martyred in 1608.— Before reaching this point England becomes the home of Christian propagandism and the instructress of the Teutonic races.—At the death of Bede, Boniface is already the apostle of Germany.

BOOK XIV

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL INFLUENCE OF THE MONKS AMONG THE ANGLO-SAXONS

"Record we too, with just and faithful pen,
That many hooded cenobites there are,
Who in their private cells have yet a care
Of public quiet; unambitious Men,
Counsellors for the world, of piercing ken;
Whose fervent exhortations from afar
Move Princes to their duty, peace or war;
And oft-times in the most forbidding den
Of solitude, with love of science strong,
How patiently the yoke of thought they bear. . . .
By such examples moved to unbought pains
The people work like congregated bees;
Eager to build the quiet fortresses,
Where piety, as they believe, obtains
From heaven a general blessing; timely rains
And sunshine; prosperous enterprise, and peace and equity."

WORDSWORTH.

I

A CENTURY and a half passed between the establishment of St. Augustin at Canterbury and the final erection of a second metropolitan see at York—between the first written laws of the first Christian king of Kent, and those decrees of the Council of Cloveshove which established a sort of confederation among the Anglo-Saxon bishops, and at the same time sanctioned and made general[1] the parochial system,

[1] "Ut una fit omnium concordia . . . in sermone, in opere, in judicio, sine cujusquam adulatione personæ. . . . Ut licet sedibus sint divisi per

which is still the foundation of temporal and spiritual life in the country districts of England.[1]

During this interval all the inhabitants of Great Britain had become Christian; and all Britons and Saxons had acknowledged the supremacy of the Holy See, substituting everywhere the observances of Rome in place of the ancient customs of Celtic Christianity.

This great victory was the exclusive work of the monks.

With no human aid—with, at the most, the protecting sympathy of a woman[2] to help them—they entered all the kingdoms of the Heptarchy, one by one, as missionaries, and remained there as bishops, as pastors, as permanent preachers. Little by little they thus conquered the British soil, and covered it with their establishments. Their work had been slow and difficult. Stormy incidents and melancholy changes had not been wanting in it. Sons did not always allow themselves to be led by the example of their fathers, nor nations by that of their neighbours. Let us recall the first defection of the Jutes in Kent immediately after the death of Ethelbert, the double apostacy of the Saxons of the East, the rage of the old British Christians against the Teutonic converts, the destruction by fire and sword of the new-born Christianity in Northumbria, the horrible ravages of the heathen Penda among all his Christian neighbours!

All these difficulties and trials they met only with an unconquerable perseverance and gentleness. A hundred and fifty years after the arrival of Augustin, a holy abbot,

diversa loca, tamen mentibus conjuncti in uno spiritu Deo deserviant."—Cap. 2. For all the details of this famous Council, which was held in the presence of the Mercian king Ethelbald, the friend of the holy monk Guthlac, see the excellent narrative of Lingard, *Antiquities*, vol. i. p. 124, and Note G.

[1] Cap. 9, 10, 14. Cf. LE PLAY, *La Réforme Sociale déduite de l'Observation Comparée des Peuples Européens*, t. ii. ch. 7, § 55.

[2] Bertha the Merovingian in Kent; her daughter Ethelburga in Northumbria; the heathen bride of the holy King Oswald in Wessex; and the Christian bride of the son of Penda in Mercia.

friend of St. Aldhelm, and, like him, trained at Malmesbury, revealed the secret of their power to his illustrious countryman St. Boniface, who was then occupied in carrying the light of the Gospel from England to Germany. "To overcome," he said, "the obstinacy of heathen savages—to fertilise the stony and barren soil of their hearts—pains must be taken not to insult or irritate them, but to set our doctrines before them with unfailing moderation and gentleness, so as to make them blush at their foolish superstitions without exasperating them."[1]

Thus armed, the monks finally triumphed everywhere; and everywhere, with the free consent of the people, proved by the public deliberations of the national assemblies of each kingdom, where each had the freedom of giving an answer in his turn.[2] Let us repeat, to the immortal glory of the monastic conquerors of England, that neither they, their disciples, nor their protectors, used violence or persecution for the aid of evangelical truth.[3] The faith as preached by the monks was nowhere enforced by a master; nowhere was it admitted without examination and discussion; nowhere was it propagated or defended among our insular Saxons by the sanguinary means used by Charlemagne among the Saxons on the other side of the Rhine.

At a later period, it is true, in conformity with the general spirit of Christian nations, and in proportion as the ties between religion and society became closer, penal legislation often transformed itself into a helper of Christian morality and ecclesiastical discipline. The assemblies, in which bishops and abbots had a place beside kings and

[1] "Non quasi insultando vel irritando eos, sed placide ac magna objicere moderatione debes."—*Epist.* 15 *inter Bonifacianas*, ed Jaffé.

[2] "Habito cum sapientibus consilio, sciscitabatur singillatim ab omnibus, qualis sibi doctrina hæc . . . videretur. . . . Cæteri majores natu ac regis consiliarii."—BEDE, ii. 13.

[3] We have quoted the only exception to this rule in Sussex, p. 52 of this volume.

landowners, often decreed severe or shameful penalties for apostacy,[1] for the violation of Sunday rest or the fasts of Lent,[2] and especially for drunkenness and incontinence, which were the most common vices among the Anglo-Saxons. But these penalties never went the length of torture or bloodshed, as often happened where the Byzantine laws had infected Catholic nations with its poison. Up to the present moment, thanks to God, in these distant centuries, in the midst of gross immorality, beside scandals which we have not attempted to conceal or deny, we have not met with one single bloody or cruel act which can be attributed to any Anglo-Saxon bishop, priest, or monk. Faithful to the precepts and example of their first and glorious master St. Gregory the Great, they gained hearts and governed souls by the irresistible might of kindness; and, though not above the reach of human infirmity, remained long strangers and superior to the bitterness, covetousness, and violence which are too often to be met with in the history of the Church, and which she has always had to pay for by a loss of souls.

Such apostles found neophytes worthy of them. "No nation," says, with justice, Edmund Burke, the most illustrious of their descendants, "has embraced Christianity with more fervour and simplicity than the Anglo-Saxons."[3] The permanent and generous struggle, which shows itself everywhere from the moment of their conversion, between their new principles and their old instincts, their savage traditions of murder, vengeance, and debauchery, demonstrate at once the sincerity of their faith and the merit of their submission. For a long time they alternate between atrocious crimes and unbounded penances, between auda-

[1] The most severe penalty pronounced against apostacy was that of *healsfang*, which interpreters translate as stocks or pillory—a penalty, however, which might be evaded by the contributions of friends.—THORPE, i. 45; LINGARD, i. 112.

[2] BEDE, iii. 8.

[3] BURKE, *Essay towards an Abridgment of English History*, c. iii.

cious rapine and a giving up of all earthly goods, between odious outrages upon modesty and vows of perpetual chastity. They were capable of every sin to satisfy their passions, and were not less capable of every sacrifice to expiate their excesses. But in the long-run, and sometimes very speedily, goodness carried the day, and, except for some terrible backslidings which were inevitable, remained master of the field, thanks to the generous and unwearied efforts of the monastic apostles. Wherever the hand, the words, the spirit of the monk, bishop, or missionary can reach, a uniform tendency is evident, both in morals and laws, in word and deed, towards justice, humanity, the love of goodness, and neighbourly charity; subduing the native fierceness of their countrymen; struggling against the most popular vices and excesses; introducing intellectual culture; creating and maintaining social peace from religious motives. The great mission which devolved upon the Church after the ruin of the Empire, that of restraining and ennobling the barbarians, of purifying and transforming their souls, was never more completely fulfilled.

And perhaps also the alliance between the two societies temporal and spiritual, between Church and State, was never more completely and happily realised. It was the climax of this union, at least in England, a moment which had its stains and miseries like everything here below, but which was free on both sides from permanent and systematic excesses. No king of the period attempted to govern or use the Church for his own advantage; no pontiff, in these exclusively monastic times, claimed that deceitful ascendancy which precedes or produces decadence and rebellion.

Certainly the Anglo-Saxon monks, instruments of a revolution so fruitful, and creators of an organisation so brilliant and lasting, had nothing, except their name, their celibate condition, their faith in Jesus Christ and His Church, in common with the Fathers of the desert, or even with the rare and austere companions of St. Benedict. Far from

flying the company of other Christians, they impersonated or created Christian society around them. Far from thinking of their own salvation alone, they laboured without intermission, first for the salvation of infidels, and afterwards for the maintenance of faith and morality in the new Christian communities formed by their instructions. Far from confining themselves to prayer or manual labour, they cultivated and extended with enthusiasm all the knowledge and literature possessed by the world in their days. The distant places to which they had been first led by a love of solitude changed rapidly, and as if by force of circumstances into cathedrals, cities, towns, or rural colonies, and served as centres, schools, libraries, workshops, and citadels to the scarcely converted families, parties, and tribes. Around the monastic cathedrals and the principal communities, towns which are still in existence formed rapidly, and municipal liberties soon dawned into life among them, the vital guarantees of which still exist along with the very names of the magistrates charged with their defence and maintenance.[1]

All the bishops of the Heptarchy, as our narrative must have proved, issued from monasteries; the clergy of the cathedrals were exclusively monks who lived in community with their diocesan prelate at their head. For a century at least they held the place of the secular or parochial clergy. The monasteries were centres from which missionaries went forth to the rural stations to baptize, preach, and celebrate all the ceremonies of worship, and into which they returned to revive themselves by study and prayer. Rural parishes were formed but slowly under the influence of Archbishop Theodore in the south, and of Archbishop Egbert and Bede in the north. The monasteries thus long supplied in Christian England the place not only of cathedrals but of parish churches. Most of the cathedrals preserved their monastic character until long after the Norman Conquest. The decrees of the council of Cloves-

[1] KEMBLE, vol. ii. pp. 330, 338.

hove, in 747, are the first authentic documents which treat as a general fact the distribution of lay lands into districts administered by priests under the control of bishops, in distinction from churches situated in the lands belonging to the monasteries and served by priests under the control of their abbots. The latter churches, in which the priest was always assisted by a deacon and several clerks, were sometimes called *monasteriuncula.*

When parishes were thus organised, most of the priests placed at the head of the new divisions of the country were naturally brought from the monasteries.[1] All was to make or to make anew in that great work, for it must be repeated that every trace of ancient British Christianity had disappeared before the Saxons. Except at Glastonbury, which had been at all times one of the great centres of Celtic devotion,[2] in the little Roman church at Canterbury, where Queen Bertha was wont to pray,[3] and at Evesham, where the ruins of a little British church were found in the thicket which had to be cleared away for the foundation of the new abbey,[4] no vestige of the Christianity of the Britons or Romans is to be found in the history of the conquest of England by the monks.

This extension of their office and influence had not been attained in any other Christian nation; but it did not banish from the mind of the Anglo-Saxon monks the necessity of maintaining and guaranteeing the fundamental conditions of their institution. The rule of St. Benedict, which had been brought into England along with the Gospel by the first envoys of the Benedictine pope, St. Gregory the Great, had followed step by step the progress of evangelisation and Roman supremacy, and finally supplanted all the monastic regulations of Celtic countries or times. From Wilfrid to

[1] Lingard (*Antiquities of the Anglo-Saxon Church*, vol. i. p. 457) perfectly explains all that concerns the organisation of the parochial clergy. See what has been said above, vol. iii. p. 431.

[2] See vol. ii. p. 382. [3] See vol. iii. p. 192. [4] See above, p. 105.

Bede, all the popular saints, Cuthbert, Egwin, Benedict Biscop, Botulph, and Aldhelm, distinguished themselves by their zeal for the Benedictine rule, although giving to it slight modifications and additions such as suited the country and age. There existed, however, no hierarchical connection among the different monasteries, no chapter general, and, except the tie formed by Wilfrid between the nine or ten houses founded by himself,[1] no general congregation of different communities, such as has been so general since. The only link between the continually increasing monasteries which covered the British soil was in the code, already a thing of antiquity, which had come from Rome with the Christian faith, and which the second council of Cloveshove names simply *the Rule*, as if it had become the sole rule recognised and put in practice.[2]

Most of the councils held in England from the end of the seventh century gave a place to monastic interests in their decrees, which was in keeping with the preponderance of monastic prelates in the assemblies where these decrees were discussed or promulgated. Let us note the council of Beccancelde,[3] called, in 694, by Withred, king of Kent, the fifth descendant of Ethelbert, which was presided over by Archbishop Brithwald, and at which the learned Grecian, Tobie, bishop of Rochester, many abbots, priests, lords, and *five abbesses* were present.[4]

The king summed up the deliberations of the assembly. "I desire," said he, "that the monasteries and churches which have been given or bequeathed for the glory of God, in the time of the faithful kings, my relatives and pre-

[1] See above, p. 113.

[2] Cap. 24. Cf. MABILLON, præf. in I secul., § 37.

[3] This is supposed to be Beckenham, or, according to Hook, Bapchild, near Sittingbourne.

[4] "Cæteris abbatibus, abbatissis, presbyteris, diaconibus, ducibus, satrapis, in unum glomeratis; pariter tractantes, anxie examinantes de statu ecclesiarum Dei vel monasteriorum intra Cantiam."—*Procem. ms. Cantuar.*, ap. COLETTI *Concil.*, vol. viii. p. 77. We will speak of these abbesses further on.

decessors, may remain dedicated to him for ever. I, Withred, earthly king, moved by the celestial King, and inspired by the love of justice, have learned from our ancestors that no layman has a right to take possession of any church whatsoever, nor of anything that belongs to that church. For this reason we interdict all kings, our successors, all eorls, or other laymen, from exercising authority over churches or their possessions which I and my predecessors have given as a perpetual inheritance to Christ, to the Holy Virgin, and to the apostles. When an abbot or abbess dies, let notice be given to the archbishop, and let his successor be chosen only after the purity of his life has been acknowledged by the bishop. It is the king's duty to choose the eorls and ealdormen, the sheriffs and judges; but it is the office of the archbishop to rule the Church of God, to elect and constitute bishops, abbots, abbesses, priests, and deacons, and to confirm them by his good example." [1]

Another decree of the same council exempts the monasteries of Kent from all secular bondage, and notably from maintaining the king and lords during their journeys, which is an evidence that monastic hospitality, always so generous and spontaneous, had been cruelly abused by the greed and rapacity of powerful laymen.[2] Three years after,

[1] "Volo ut omnes monasteria et ecclesiæ quæ fuerint datæ et legatæ Dei in gloriam, regum fidelium meorum prædecessorum diebus . . . ita supersint Dei in honorem et firmiter remaneant in sæcula sæculorum. Cum ego Wihtredus, terrestris rex, a cœlesti Rege incitatus et spiritu justitiæ accensus, a nostris avis illud didicerim quod nullus laicus jure debet seipsum immittere in quamvis ecclesiam." — *Chron. Saxon.*, ed. Gibson, p. 48. Neither Bede nor Malmesbury mentions this council. Spelman, however, has found its decrees in five different MSS. The double report of these decrees given after his account in Coletti, vol. viii. p. 77, is much longer than that of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, but contains no essential addition.

[2] "Ex hac die donamus ecclesiis regni nostri liberas esse perpetua libertate ab omnibus difficultatibus secularis servitutis, a pastu regis, principum, comitum . . . ab omni debito vel pulsione regalium tributorum, ut possint, pro nobis Deo omnipotenti hostias dignas offerre,

in a new assembly held at Berkhampstead, presided over by the same king and archbishop, and entitled a council, though many warriors occupied seats in it along with the clergy, the freedom of the Church was again guaranteed, along with that of its jurisdiction, its property, and its prayers.[1] The decrees of these councils held in the kingdom of Kent, under the presidency of the metropolitan, were soon adopted over all England. They were solemnly confirmed at the first council of Cloveshove in 742 by Ethelbald, king of the Mercians, who was then the most powerful prince of the Heptarchy, and who, from his youthful friendship with the hermit Guthlac, had always been well disposed towards the monks.[2] It was at the same time decided that the exemption from all contributions to the public treasury granted to the monks did not extend to the taxes levied for the three principal necessities of the time (*trinoda necessitas*), the preservation of roads and bridges (*brycgbote*), of national fortresses (*burghbote*), and of military expeditions (*fyrd*).

The second council of Cloveshove—which was the most important of the Anglo-Saxon assemblies of the eighth century,[3] and was called in consequence of a celebrated

nostraque peccata abluere immaculatis muneribus . . . nisi sua spontanea voluntate, ex largitate beneficiorum quid facere velint."—*Concilia*, vol. viii. pp. 78, 80.

[1] "Libera sit ecclesia, fruaturque suis judiciis, et redditibus seu pensionibus. Pro rege preces fiant, mandatisque ejus, non cogente necessitate, sed ex sponte obediunto."—*Concil.*, vol. viii. p. 99. This Latin is a much more recent translation of the Saxon text of the twenty-eight articles intituled *Judicia* (Dooms) of Withred.

[2] "Studiose requirentes qualiter in primordio nascentis ecclesiæ hic in Anglia jubebatur haberi honor cœnobiorum secundum normam æquitatis . . . tandem pervenit ad manus libertas ecclesiarum et institutio Withredi regis de electione et auctoritate cœnobiorum in regno Cantiæ."—*Concil.*, vol. viii. p. 267. Cloveshove or *Cliff'shoo*, where these famous councils were held, is placed by the best authorities at Cliff, near Rochester, in the part of Kent between the Thames and Medway. Others suppose that these councils were held at Abingdon or Tewkesbury, which was then one of the great abbeys of Gloucestershire.

[3] See above, p. 303, note 1.

letter from St. Boniface to the archbishop of Canterbury, and specially because of the severe orders of Pope Zacharius —added new guarantees and also new obligations to the already important mission of the monks, taking effectual measures against the abuses and oppressions which had been pointed out almost at the same moment by Boniface in his letter to the archbishop of Canterbury, and by Bede to the archbishop of York.

II

It is then to the monks scattered as missionaries and preachers over the country, or united in the numerous communities of episcopal cities and other great monastic centres, that must be in justice attributed the initiation of the Anglo-Saxons into the truths of religion as well as into the consoling and readily adopted observances of Catholic worship. They were expressly commanded to teach and explain to their flocks, in the vernacular tongue, the Decalogue, the Lord's Prayer, the Apostles' Creed, and the sacred words which were used in the celebration of mass and the administration of baptism; to expound to them every Sunday, in English, the epistle and gospel of the day, and to preach, or, instead of preaching, to read them something useful to their souls.[1]

The zeal of the Anglo-Saxon kings[2] and people for religious instruction in their own language has been already pointed out. From this spring those homilies in Anglo-Saxon which are so often to be met with among the manuscripts in our libraries, and which are by several centuries of an earlier date than the earliest religious documents of any other modern language. Thence also came those trans-

[1] "Ut symbolum fidei ac dominicam orationem, sed et sacrosancta quoque verba quæ in missæ celebratione et officio baptismi solemniter dicuntur, interpretari atque exponere posse propria lingua qui nesciant, discant."—*Concil. Clovesh.*, can. 16. Cf. THORPE, *op. cit.*, p. 159, and LINGARD, *Antiquities*, vol. i. p. 167.

[2] See vol. iii. p. 352.

lations of Holy Scripture which abounded in the cloisters from the seventh century, and which probably were circulated outside their boundaries,—translations ascribed by certain historians to the pens of the most illustrious monks —to Aldhelm and the Venerable Bede, who are said to have completely translated, the one the Psalter, and the other the Old and New Testaments.[1]

The Sunday rest, still more scrupulously observed in England than in any other Christian country, was, from the beginning of the monastic mission, the object of special precautions. The Penitentiary of Theodore records the most minute regulations for preserving labourers, vine-dressers, and gardeners, as well as needlewomen, spinners, and washerwomen, from any infringement of that essential guarantee of freedom for both body and soul.[2]

The solemn beauty of the worship celebrated in the monastic churches was increased by the liturgical uniformity in accordance with Roman rites which had been everywhere substituted for the Celtic, and were formally decreed by the council of Cloveshove.[3] And it must have had a still greater effect upon the people, from the gradual introduction of organs, the powerful melody of which our Aldhelm had already celebrated.[4] The first mention of them in England

[1] LAPPENBERG, vol. i. p. 197.

[2] "Nec viri ruralia opera exerceant, nec in vinea colenda, nec in campos arando, metendo, vel fœnum secando, vel sæpem ponendo. . . . Nec in horto laborent, nec ad placita conveniant, nec venationes exerceant. Item feminæ opera textilia non faciant, nec abluant vestimenta, nec consuant, nec lanam carpere, nec linum batere (*sic*), nec vestimenta lavare, nec verveces tondere. . . . Et ad missarum solemnia ad ecclesias undique conveniant, et laudent Deum pro omnibus bonis, quæ nobis in illa die fecit."—C. 38, § 8.

[3] "Ut eamdem monasterialis psalmodiæ puritatem ubique sectentur, nihilque quod communis usus non admittit, præsumant cantare aut legere, sed tantum quod ex sacrarum scripturarum auctoritate descendit, et quod Romanæ Ecclesiæ consuetudo permittit."—*Can.* 15.

[4] "Maxima millenis auscultans organa fiabris,
Mulceat auditum ventosis follibus iste,
Quamlibet auratis fulgescant cætera capsis."
—*De Laudibus Virginum*, ed. Giles, p. 138.

is connected with the abbey of Malmesbury, which, being situated not far from Cambria, and founded by a Celt, might offer a new attraction by means of that touching and majestic harmony to the essentially musical Welsh.[1]

In addition to the ceremonies celebrated within the churches, which were still too distant from each other to provide for all spiritual necessities, the solicitude of the monastic missionaries had extended the worship of the cross, for the instruction and consolation of the uncultured country people. The mysterious symbol of the redemption of the human race by the sufferings of the Son of God was raised from point to point on the hillsides and in the valleys of England, now ransomed from the heathen yoke. The crucifix which St. Augustin had presented for the first time to Ethelbert, on the morning after he landed on the banks of the Thames, and which the holy and pious Oswald had planted for the first time as a sign of hope and deliverance upon the soil of Northumbria on the eve of his first battle, stood in the place of an oratory and sanctuary in many districts scarcely yet cleared from the forest. A cross raised in the middle of a field was enough to satisfy the devotions of the thane, his ploughmen and shepherds. They gathered around it for public and daily prayer,[2] and were inspired by it with a veneration not less affectionate than that which attached to the sanctuaries, daily increasing in number, which were almost all dedicated to the mother of Christ or St. Peter; for the prince of the apostles was then the saint most universally and frequently invoked by the Christians of England.[3]

The unrivalled benefit of the faith was not the only ser-

[1] Cf. LAPPENBERG, i. 198.

[2] "Sic mos est Saxonicæ gentis, quod in nonnullis nobilium bonorumque hominum prædiis, non ecclesiam sed Sanctæ Crucis signum Deo dicatum, cum magno honore almum, in alto erectum, ad commodam diurnæ orationis sedulitatem solent habere."—*Vita S. Willibaldi*, ap. MABILLON, *Act. SS. O. S. B.*, t. iv.

[3] LINGARD, *op. cit.*, ii. 87–107.

vice which the Benedictines lavished on converted England. It is at the risk of falling into repetition and commonplace that we dwell upon the immense services they rendered, there as everywhere, if not more there than anywhere else, to public instruction and to agriculture. We flatter ourselves that we have furnished, almost at every page of these volumes, evidence of what they have done for the intellectual nourishment of England. It has been seen that among the Anglo-Saxons, as well as among the Celts of Ireland, Caledonia, and Cambria, monasteries were the sole centres of a religious and liberal education, and that knowledge was there at once much sought, very varied, and very literary. This was not the case solely in the isolated cloisters which were devoted to monastic education. The bishops, all of whom came out of monasteries, changed the cloisters of their cathedrals into schools, and collected around them a numerous band of youths eager for work and for study.

One of those public benefactors who distinguished himself the most in this respect was John, whose name we have already met as one of the intruders who repeatedly divided between them the diocese of Wilfrid.[1] We may justly be blamed for not dwelling longer on him, so great was his popularity among the English of his own day, and until the end of the middle ages.[2] Though he was best known under the name of St. John of Beverley, from the place where he passed the last four years of his life in solitude, and which afterwards became one of the greatest monastic establish-

[1] See above, p. 68, note 2, and p. 96.

[2] The banner of St. John of Beverley was placed with those of St. Wilfrid and St. Cuthbert on the sacred cart at the battle of the Standard in 1138 (see above, p. 112). The same banner was the oriflamme of Edward I. in one of his great expeditions. Two centuries later the popularity of the holy abbot of Beverley was renewed by the coincidence of the feast of *his translation*, celebrated in 1037 on the 25th October, falling on the day of the victory of Agincourt. Shakespeare (as also the Roman Breviary) speaks only of St. Crispin and Crispianus as patrons of that day. But in August 1421 Henry V. gave thanks for his victory before the shrine of the Anglo-Saxon saint at Beverley.

ments of the north of England,[1] he was in the first place a monk at Whitby under the great Abbess Hilda, and afterwards bishop, in succession, of Hexham and York. He was a disciple of Archbishop Theodore, and it was he who had the honour of conferring the orders of deacon and priest upon the Venerable Bede. Between these two great luminaries of the Anglo-Saxon Church, he himself shone during his thirty-two years' episcopate with a pure and gentle light, thanks to his tender anxiety for all the spiritual and temporal necessities of his flock, and the supernatural help which he brought to them in their sicknesses and troubles. Bede has devoted several chapters full of interest to his history. He exhibits him to us employing the most minute and affectionate pains to heal a poor young cripple, who was dumb and afflicted with scurvy, of all his infirmities, but especially of his dumbness, teaching him by the aid of heaven to speak and read, and beginning with the alphabet like the humblest of teachers.[2]

But another scene, which touches our subject more immediately, is that in which we behold him surrounded by a group of youths, some ecclesiastics, but the greater part laymen, whom the monk-bishop trained to the study of letters and music, without extinguishing in them the taste for athletic exercises, which was then, as now, inherent in the English race. These students followed their master on horseback through his pastoral visitations, and when they

[1] It included a monastery of Benedictines, a college of canons, and a nunnery. The church, built at first by St. John, was destroyed by the Danes, re-established by Athelstane, respected by William the Conqueror, and rebuilt magnificently in the thirteenth century. It is one of the finest monuments of English architecture.

[2] "Jussit ad se intrare pauperem, ingresso eo, linguam proferre ex ore ac sibi ostendere jussit. . . . *Dicito*, inquiens, *aliquod verbum, dicito Gæ.* . . . Addidit episcopus nomina litterarum: *Dicito A:* dixit ille, A. *Dicito B:* dixit ille et hoc. . . . Neque ultra cessavit tota die ac nocte sequente, quantum vigilare potuit . . . loqui aliquid, et arcana, suæ cogitationis ac voluntatis, quod nunquam antea potuit, aliis ostendere."—*Hist. Eccles.*, v. 2.

found themselves on level ground took advantage of the occasion to ride races with each other at the risk of breaking their heads, as happened to a young monk, afterwards abbot of Tynemouth, who related all these details to the Venerable Bede. The joyous impetuosity of the young horsemen, their entreaties to the bishop for permission to ride their races under his eyes, the consent which was finally wrested from him under the condition that his favourite among them should remain by his side, the impossibility which this favourite experienced of resisting the impulse and example of his comrades, his wild gallop to rejoin the others, his accident, his swoon, the tender anxiety of the good prelate, the cares which he lavished on the imprudent youth, passing the entire night in prayer by his side, until the dying young man opened his eyes and said, "I know you; you are my bishop, whom I love"—all this makes up one of the most complete and attractive pictures in the abundant stores of the great monastic historian.[1]

We must stop short here in order not to begin over again, as we should be too often tempted to do, the edifying but monotonous tale which proves the studious fervour of both masters and pupils in the monastic schools.

But it is impossible to avoid a brief notice of what has

[1] "Cum in primævo adolescentiæ tempore in clero illius degerem legendi canendique studiis traditus . . . contigit nos iter agentes cum illo devenisse in viam planam et amplam aptamque cursui equorum: cœperuntque juvenes, maxime laici, postulare episcopum ut cursu majore equos suos invicem probare liceret. At ille primo negavit . . . sed ad ultimum multorum unanima intentione devictus: *Facite*, inquit, *ut vultis*. . . . Ipse diligentius obsecrans, ut et mihi certandi cum illis copia daretur. . . . Cum sæpius, spectante me et episcopo, concitatis in cursum equis reverterentur, ipse lascivo animo non me potui cohibere, sed, prohibente licet illo, ludentibus me miscui. . . . Audivi illum post tergum mihi cum gemitu dicentem: *O quam magnam væ facis mihi sic equitando*. . . . Dum fervens equus quoddam itineris concavum valentiore impetu transiliret, lapsus decidi, sensum perdidi. . . . Evenit ut . . . infracto pollice capitis quoque junctura solveretur. . . . Vomebam saguinem. . . . At ego aperiens oculos aio: *Etiam; tu es antistes amatus*."—BEDE, v. 6.

been done by the monks in England for the improvement of agriculture. It is impossible to forget the use they made of so many vast districts, uncultivated and uninhabited, covered with forests or surrounded with marshes. Such was, it must not be forgotten, the true nature of the vast estates given to the monks, and which had thus the double advantage of offering to communities the most inaccessible retreat that could be found, and of imposing the least possible sacrifice upon the munificence of the givers. They surmounted all the difficulties which stared them in the face, of beginning the cultivation of a new country; the forests were cleared, the marshes made wholesome or dried up, the soil irrigated or drained, according to the requirements of each locality; and bridges, roads, dykes, havens, and lighthouses were erected wherever their possessions or influence extended, in evidence of their unwearied and watchful fervour. The half at least of broad Northumberland was lost in sandy plains and barren heaths; the half of East Anglia and a considerable part of Mercia were covered with marshes difficult of access, in the midst of which the future king, Ethelbald, found refuge with the hermit Guthlac: yet in both regions the monks substituted for these uninhabited deserts fat pasturage and abundant harvests.[1]

The latter district, the present name of which (*the Fens*) alone recalls the marshy and unwholesome nature of the original soil, became the principal theatre of the triumphs of agricultural industry performed by the monks. Medehamstede,[2] Ely, Croyland, Thorney, Ramsey, were the first battlefields of these conquerors of nature, these monks who made of themselves ploughmen, breeders and keepers of stock, and who were the true fathers of English agriculture, which, thanks to their traditions and example, has become the first agriculture in the world.

[1] Cf. LINGARD, i. 267.

[2] The original name of Peterborough; see vol. iii. p. 407.

The English word *improvement*, so frequently used, and so expressive in relation to everything that concerns bodily and mental labour, seems to have been invented expressly for their use. As much might be said for another word, more ancient still, but not less used—the word *landlord*, which expresses not only the sentiment of dominion and territorial possession, but also that kind of tutelary and almost parental solicitude which so happily combines the obligations and the rights of property. They were the best of *landlords;* such is the testimony given, by all attentive and conscientious observers of the past history of England, to the monks who were the originators of ecclesiastical property in that country, and who long remained its sole guardians. It was not only by their gifts, by their able and generous indulgence towards their direct dependants, that they exercised upon the inferior classes an influence always benevolent, and always gratefully acknowledged. It was by the effectual, enlightened, and unwearied protection which they extended to the poor and weak, who were under other laws and served other masters. "They were," according to one of the great masters of modern learning, "permanent mediators between the rich and poor, between the strong and the weak; and it must be said to their eternal honour that they understood and fulfilled in a marvellous way the duties of this noble mission. They alone had the right and the means of arresting the rough hand of power, of mitigating the just severity of the law, of showing a gleam of hope to the eye of the slave, and of finding, even in this world, a place and means of existence for all those forsaken ones whose existence was ignored by the State." [1]

Thus, then, thanks to the Anglo-Saxon Benedictines, the maternal authority of the Church began to extend over all weakness and suffering. It grew visibly, interposing whenever it was necessary against all violence and tyranny.

[1] KEMBLE, *Saxons in England*, vol. ii. p. 375.

III

How, then, was this office, so godlike and glorious, given, from the very beginning of Christianity in England, to the abbots, the great monks, and the bishops, who were produced by the monastic order? The influence of Christian faith and morality, of which they were the interpreters and guardians, contributed to it more than any other reason. But it would be unjust to pass over another cause, almost as effectual—the close and lasting union between the monastic order and the Anglo-Saxon aristocracy. This aristocracy, converted by the monks, promptly and cordially opened its ranks to them. History has not preserved the memory of any race which adopted, not only the belief, but the precepts and counsels of the Gospel with more enthusiasm than did the high nobility, which was composed of the dynasties and ruling families of the Heptarchy. Never and nowhere have so many men of royal or patrician race devoted themselves to the hard discipline of the cloister, to the penitential life of anchorites, to the dangers inseparable from pilgrimages and missions in countries still pagan. This aristocracy, fond of fighting, of good cheer, of all sensual pleasures, and of pomp and magnificence which, both in their own persons and in those of their descendants, became proverbial,[1] found itself all at once ripe for the noblest exploits of self-mortification, of Gospel humility, and chastity. After the first foreign masters, new apostles, issued from its own bosom, continued to show it the path of Christian virtue, marching resolutely at its head.

From thence sprang an alliance between the aristocracy and the clergy, between religion and the State, more characteristic, intimate, and cordial, as has been already said, than existed anywhere else in the Teutonic and Christian

[1] "Ex pompa Anglum intelliges."—GUILL. MALMESB., *Vita Aldhelmi*, p. 7.

world. Anglo-Saxon princes and nobles became in rapid succession monks, abbots, and bishops; but these prelates and clergy, belonging to the sovereign races, retained, in their own country and among their neighbours, a place equal or superior to that which they occupied as laymen. They were instantly recognised or elevated to the most important rank in English society. On the other hand, this rank and those functions were often coveted by men inspired with passions very different from the sacred fire which burned in the heart of Wilfrid, Benedict Biscop, Guthlac, and the other saints who belonged to the highest ranks of Anglo-Saxon nobility.

In England, as elsewhere, and perhaps more than elsewhere, this intimate alliance between the heads of the two forms of society, spiritual and temporal, and the constant mutual action of the one on the other, produced results dear and salutary to the Church as well as to the State. The advantage, however, was almost always greater for the State than for the Church, and indeed sometimes became dangerous and compromised the latter. Abuses there, as everywhere, inevitably followed benefits. These will be evident but too soon. At the same time, before going on to consideration of the shadows which it is impossible to deny or suppress in a sincere historic picture, let us first contemplate the light which preceded them.

It was not certainly by any encroachment, either open or concealed, on the rights of others, nor by any secret or violent means, that the heads of the monastic order rose to the highest rank in the Anglo-Saxon nation. They were called to it by the natural course of things and the unanimous voice of men. Representatives of the most elevated social offices, initiated into all the necessities of elective government, of communal life, and voluntary subordination, they took their place naturally in a government based, in the first place, upon a social hierarchy consecrated by mutual service and hereditary or freely offered devotion;

and in the second, upon the sovereign and permanent action of public assemblies. These envoys of Christianity brought an essentially important and much-desired sanction to the usages and institutions which substituted among those noble scions of the Teutonic race the proud independence of an often heroic, but sometimes exacting and troublesome, devotion, for the abject submission of the degraded serfs of the Roman Empire.

Not only the bishops, who all belonged to the monastic order, but abbots, and often abbesses, occupied the first place in those national or provincial assemblies which have been so often referred to in this narrative, and which, under the name of Witenagemot, or assembly of wise men, were the cradle of the English Parliament; guaranteeing to the Anglo-Saxon people the benefit of a government sustained and controlled by the lay and ecclesiastical nobility, and making decisions which could not be violated or despised with impunity by any monarch.

At the period which we have now arrived at, each kingdom of the Heptarchy, and even each of the tribes comprised in or absorbed by the greatest of those kingdoms,[1] had its special assembly, an institution retained at a later period, when England was united under the sceptre of one monarch, by each *shire* or province. But there also existed assemblies more or less general, the authority of which was recognised in differing degrees by all the divisions of the conquering race. To these conferences especially, which ecclesiastical historians have honoured with the name of councils, the presence of several monk-bishops, presided over by their metropolitan, a monk like themselves, had the power of giving a more august character. The Council of Hertford, presided over by the Greek Theodore,[2] decreed that a general synod should be held twice a year at Clove-

[1] Such as the Hwiccas, the Middle Angles in Mercia, and the Gyrwas in East Anglia.

[2] See vol. iii. p. 433.

shove. But, besides that this assembly appears to have been exclusively ecclesiastical, there is no evidence that its decree was obeyed. A century passed before England possessed one sole, permanent, and regular assembly. At the same time, from the introduction of Christianity, local or national assemblies became visible, constituting a great council of the whole country, and meeting periodically at Christmas and at Easter.

The monastic prelates held their seats in these assemblies at once as the doctors and spiritual guides of the nation and as great landed proprietors, whose importance was daily increased by the extent of the new gifts which were lavished upon them, and by the increasing agricultural value of their old possessions. They sat in the first rank with the principal lords, the great chiefs of the nobility, the governors of provinces, called earls or ealdormen;[1] and above the other proprietors who, under the name of thanes, composed the greater part of the assembly. According to the theory most generally received by modern learning,[2] each thane or proprietor might reach the rank of earl[3] by the choice of the king or nomination of the assembly. Every *ceorl*, or free man, whatever his origin might be, could be advanced to the rank of thane if he possessed lands of a certain extent. Every merchant who had made three journeys beyond seas rose into the same class. But no nobleman by

[1] Whom Bede entitles *duces* or *comites*, proving their rank to be equal to that of the bishop. *Ealdor* or *elder* answers to the Latin *senior*, from whence comes *seigneur*. This ancient title, once the first in the Saxon hierarchy, the bearers of which, either hereditary or for their lifetime, were almost the equals of the king, may be recognised to-day in the name of *alderman*, which has fallen exclusively, as we have already remarked, to elective municipal officials in London and the other great cities.

[2] See TURNER, *History of the Anglo-Saxons*, vol. iii. pp. 48, 115, 123, 130, 135, 137 (Paris edition, 1840); PALGRAVE, *Rise and Progress of the English Commonwealth*, vol. ii. pp. 376, 385; and KEMBLE, *The Saxons in England*, vol. i. c. v.

[3] Kemble, however, believes that, like the kings, they could be taken only from certain principal families.

birth could sit in the Witenagemot unless he were a landed proprietor.[1]

Whatever uncertainty may exist as to the distinctive qualifications of the two principal elements of these assemblies, it is proved that, far from forming different castes, the *eorls* and *thanes*[2] were only the first among the free men, the

[1] It was necessary to possess five *hydes*, or *mansi*, for three generations in order to be a thane, and forty to be an *eorl* or *ealdorman*. This distinction is principally founded on the evidence of a monastic historian of Ely (*Liber Eliensis*, ap. GALE, *Scriptores*, vol. ii. c. 40), speaking of the brother-in-law of his abbot, who could not, for want of those forty hydes, obtain the hand of the daughter *præpotentis viri*. He adds, "Licet nobilis esset, inter proceres tunc nominari non potuit." Let us state, at the same time, that Kemble disputes the necessity of a territorial qualification for admission to the *Witan*. And let us also remember that Abbot Benedict Biscop received eight of these *mansi* or lands for an illuminated volume. The real amount of the *hyde* (in German *hof*) remains to be discovered; the opinions of the learned are cruelly diverse on this respect, varying between a minimum of 30 acres and a maximum of 120. The acre, or day's measure, meant here, as everywhere, as much land as a pair of oxen could plough in a day. Cf. ELLIS, *Introduction to Domesday Book*, and KEMBLE, *op. cit.*

[2] The meaning of the word *thane*, or *thegn*, has evidently varied, like that of *fidelis*, or *leude* among the Franks, but it answers most generally to the *milites* or *barones* of later times. PALGRAVE, vol. ii. pp. 33, 376. The members of the Anglo-Saxon parliaments (*conventus*, *synodus*, *concilium*) received thus in public acts and in contemporary authors all sorts of different designations, of which the following are the principal: Proceres, sapientes, principes, senatores, primates, optimates, magnates, majores natu, procuratores, patriæ (of this last title there are five examples in Kemble, vol. ii. 199). Many of the acts of these assemblies quoted in the *Codex Diplomaticus Ævi Saxonici* are furnished with signatures which aid us in proving their composition. The most considerable number of signatures received in one assembly (that of Cloveshove in 825) is 121, of whom 95 were monks or clerks. A charter of 934 proves the presence at the *gemot* of the king of—

4 Welsh princes.
2 archbishops.
17 bishops.
4 abbots.
12 dukes or ealdormen.
52 thanes.

91; described as "tota populi generalitate."

heads and representatives of a territorial aristocracy the ranks of which were open to all, like that which has constituted the strength, greatness, and freedom of England for so many centuries, and which, from the beginning, was a national force representing the vital strength of the people, and its interests, will, and immemorial liberties.[1] The popular element also appears and increases slowly as we advance in history. All the inhabitants of the neighbourhood had a right to be present at the assemblies, which, for the most part, were held in the open air; they exercised at least the right of *conclamation*, which consisted in giving their public adherence to the decisions; they could also, according to Palgrave, make complaints and disclose their injuries.[2] Everything leads us to suppose that the crowd was swelled by a great number of monks, while their elective chiefs, bishops and abbots of the principal monasteries, took decisive part in the votes and deliberations.

In the temporal and spiritual government of the Anglo-Saxon nations, nothing escaped the action of these assemblies. They not only gave forth laws, they shared the actual government with the kings, and took part in all their acts, at least so far as to sanction them. No royal charter or document of state exists which does not prove at once the intervention of the assembly of wise men, and the presence of the monastic clergy in that assembly. The king could do nothing without their help or sanction.[3]

[1] The people, says Kemble, were the true aristocracy; the nobles were only its chiefs, as the English peers are at present the born chiefs of the aristocracy of freeholders and ten-pound householders. Vol. i. p. 258.

[2] Thus, in the gift given by Duke Ethelstane to the monastery of Abingdon, the fixing of boundaries, and the excommunication pronounced against transgressors, is confirmed in this fashion :—" Et dixit omnis populus qui ibi aderat: *Fiat, fiat. Amen.*" In Saxon, "Sy hit swa."—*Codex Diplom.*, n. 1129. A charter of Ethelred in 931 declares that the act is confirmed, "Tota plebis generalitate ovante."

[3] PALGRAVE, vol. i. pp. 634 to 643; LAPPENBERG, vol. i. p. 577. Beside the great scholars who have in our time renewed the study of English origin, ought to be named a French writer, M. Albert du Boys, who,

No important affair was treated, no sovereign decision taken, without this help or sanction, from the nomination of a bishop to the foundation or exemption from national burdens of a new monastery.[1] The spirit of association and the habits of independence which were the foundation of Teutonic liberties, absolutely excluded all idea of social or political abdication into the hands of a master, charged, along with his principal domestics, to think, speak, and act for the nation. Every Anglo-Saxon tribe, great or small, considered itself equal to the management of its own affairs, like the powerful and unconquerable England of our own day. We have seen these assemblies possessed not only of the consultative voice, but deciding with supreme authority as to the introduction of Christianity in the different kingdoms. No public act was valid, no new law could be established, except after discussion by them. Laws were issued by their authority, conjoined to that of the king, never by the crown alone. They decided alliances and treaties of peace, as well as the election and deposition of kings; for among the Anglo-Saxons, as among the Franks, the hereditary character of royalty was by no means absolute. The national assembly chose among the members of the national dynasty the candidate who suited them best. At each election the contract between the king and the people was renewed, often with new clauses, as has been seen even in modern history in the capitulations of the emperors of Germany and the kings of Hungary. As for the deposition of kings, the

in his *Histoire du Droit Criminel des Peuples Modernes*, has conscientiously studied and estimated English institutions and legislation, not only in his third volume, which is exclusively devoted to Anglo-Norman feudal law, but also in the previous volumes, in which he has set forth the part taken by the Anglo-Saxon clergy in the social and judicial organisation of society.

[1] This is proved by the expressions of Bede: "Hæc in jus sibi hereditarium edictis regalibus faciunt ascribi, ipsasque quoque litteras privilegiorum suorum . . . pontificum, abbatum et potestatum sæculi obtinent subscriptione confirmari."—*Epist. ad Ecgberthum.* Cf. LINGARD, vol. i. pp. 412, 413.

assemblies made little difficulty about it, when their government was unjust or unfortunate; and the monastic clergy, like all the other members of the body political, acquiesced without scruple.[1] With still better reason they regulated everything that concerned the imposition of taxes for the public service, the levy of troops, the use to be made of fines or confiscations suffered by those who broke the penal law, the grants of territory made from the public lands either to monasteries[2] or great captains. In short, they exercised the functions of a supreme court both in cases civil and criminal.[3]

No trace is to be found in the Anglo-Saxon historians of any distinction between the assemblies which treated ecclesiastical affairs and those which regulated secular life. Both were managed by the same body and at the same sitting. It is, however, very probable that the clergy deliberated apart, at least in the first place, with the aid of the king alone,[4] reserving only a power of ratification to the general assembly. The distinction between temporal and spiritual matters was not the less clearly maintained, decrees touching doctrine or discipline made out by the bishops alone being published at the head of the acts of the national assemblies, and apart from the other decisions submitted for the sanction of public authority.[5]

There is, however, in the history of the first centuries of

[1] See the deposition of Sigebert, king of Wessex, in 755, by the princes and the people of his kingdom ("Provida deliberatione et unanimo omnium consensu."—HENRI DE HUNTINGDON); and that of Beornred, king of Mercia, in 757, to make room for Offa: "Convenerunt in unum omnes, tam nobiles quam ignobiles, et Offa duce . . . ipsum a regno expulerunt. . . . Quo facto unanimo omnium consensu Offam in regem, tam clerus quam populus coronarunt."—*Flores Histor.*, ap. PALGRAVE, ii. 279.

[2] All the acts of this description bear the mention: "Cum licentia et consensu procerum" or "sapientium," &c.

[3] BEDE, *passim*; *Chron. Angl. Saxon.*; and KEMBLE, vol. ii.

[4] This is the opinion of Kemble, who believes that there were two houses, as among the Franks, one composed of laymen and the other of ecclesiastics, but both under the presidency of the king.

[5] LINGARD, *Antiquities*, vol. ii. p. 33.

the Church in England no trace of the conflict between the two powers which afterwards became so frequent, so bitter, and prolonged. As for the encroachments of spiritual authority in temporal matters in the sphere of national life, of which these assemblies were the centre, nobody was tempted to complain of, or even to perceive, its existence. Yet the public of these days was much less able to appreciate the salutary and wonderful results of the influence of monastic prelates and missionaries upon the institutions and character of the Anglo-Saxons than we are. At present the most prejudiced critics are compelled to avow that the influence of the monastic clergy in the public and social life of the English was of the most benevolent and effectual character. To them must be attributed, from the time of the first laws made by the parliament of Ethelbert, under the influence of the Roman missionaries,[1] the gradual progress of humanity and justice in the national legislation, which up to that period had been too feeble to struggle against the ferocious and covetous instincts of the barbarous conquerors.

To them belongs also the honour of that transformation of morals and souls which, notwithstanding a thousand backslidings and a thousand melancholy fallings back into ancient barbarism, showed itself in the generosity and piety of the laymen, in the obedience and fervour of a clergy drawn daily in greater numbers from the bosom of the native population. To them the credit of having introduced into the laws and customs a respect for property, and, above all, for human life, no trace of which had previously existed among the savage invaders of Great Britain. To them the honour of having contributed more than any other, by the uniformity of their wise counsels and good examples, by the unity of their doctrine and discipline, to introduce into the Anglo-Saxon nations a unity of legislation and of government which gradually led to national unity. They strengthened

[1] "Juxta exemplum Romanorum."—BEDE, ii. 5. See vol. iii. p. 227.

the throne by teaching and enforcing the practice of Christian virtues; they sanctioned and regulated the ancient Teutonic principles of the responsibility of kings, of their subordination to law, to their sworn faith and social contracts; they placed those principles under the safeguard of religion by the solemnity of consecration; they thus imprinted an august and sacred, and at the same time a limited and conditional, character upon the throne. In addition to this, while forearming it against the excesses and usurpations of princes and lords, they laboured energetically to give to it the force and authority necessary to triumph over the dismemberment of the Heptarchy, and to create that unity, not absolute and absorbing, like that which has wasted or enervated other illustrious nations, but sufficient, and in conformity with the genius and necessities of the English race, and which, when once fully established in the ninth century, has never more run the risk of attack or alteration.[1]

To them above all belongs the honour of having introduced into morals and the laws that solicitude for the inferior classes which is too often absent from the hearts of the powerful. The discoveries of modern erudition have established without doubt the unexpected result that the material condition of the inferior and serf population was not universally a state of hardship. Their labours were not more severe nor their wages less than those of our own days.[2] At the same time, it is impossible to doubt that the weak were often made victims of the violence and wickedness of the strong in the ancient English world, as everywhere else. How many oppressed innocents, how many violated rights, how many unknown or unpunished crimes existed in the midst of silence and isolation, in the vast regions still so

[1] PALGRAVE, pp. 655, 656; LAPPENBERG, i. 203. Since the union of the Heptarchy under Egbert of Wessex in 800, England has never been dismembered as France was repeatedly under the Carlovingians and Capets.

[2] Each serf received for himself and his family 720 loaves yearly, without counting the midday and evening meal.—KEMBLE, vol. i. p. 213.

sparsely inhabited? But in proportion as religion penetrated by the influence of the monks, light arose and justice appeared. Little by little, voices which could not be stifled arose, powerful hands were elevated to protect and avenge the victims. The oppressor stopped trembling; he had to bow, to repent, to make restitution, to expiate; and expiation almost always took the form of an act of fraternal charity, a service rendered to the community. As religious and monastic influence increased in the nation, the habit and duty of soothing suffering and remedying injustice became general. In every powerful family frequent acts of voluntary renunciation took the place of the brigandage, the robberies, and violence which had been up to that time their daily bread.

Every crime that was expiated, every penance that was accomplished by the efforts of the monks, thus contributed to public utility and happiness.[1] The long-unpunished culprits from whom the new faith wrested a tardy confession, an act of contrition or restitution, were often exempted from bodily penances, but were always constrained to pay the ransom of that exemption by acts of charity, which not only eased actual misery, but provided for the necessities of the future.

The penances imposed by the monks upon these great sinners and penitents were not pious works and ecclesiastical foundations alone, but oftener still the deliverance of captives, the mending of a road, the rebuilding of a bridge or of cottages, the food and maintenance of peasants brought to want by intestine wars;[2] they had a thousand devices, a thousand resources, all consecrated to the same charitable and sacred end.

The abundant gifts showered upon the churches and monasteries by the fervour of new Christians, and at the same time by the remorse of opulent sinners, were thus transformed into great and permanent benefits for the

[1] BURKE, *Essay on English History*, p. 223.
[2] LINGARD, *Antiquities*, vol. i. p. 258.

suffering members of society, for the poor and homeless, the sick, the widows, orphans, and poor travellers who were exposed to so many dangers and trials by the rudeness of the time. By this means an unfailing channel was established by which the munificence of the rich, the strong, and the happy of this world flowed forth upon the weak, the poor, and the unfortunate. It was a great public office which, without being regulated or imposed by law, took the place of all the complications with which modern legislation has invested public charity.[1] In short, it was the realisation and application of that great law of mercy and brotherly compassion which is one of the most solid and necessary foundations of human society.

Among the services rendered by the Anglo-Saxon monks to suffering humanity, none is more touching or more continual than their solicitude for those who stood on the lowest step of the social hierarchy—the slaves. The famous incident of the English captives bought in the Roman market by St. Gregory shows us, at the beginning of this narrative, that even the sons of the conquering race were not safe from this climax of misery. But under the progressive power of the faith preached by the missionaries of Pope Gregory and their successors, the number of slaves gradually diminished.[2] Notwithstanding that the trade was forbidden by decrees and councils, a hundred times repeated, and too often evaded, it continued to be carried on as a matter of commerce,[3] but very few slaves were kept in the country itself. They did not, however, form a separate race, sprung either from the conquering Saxons or the vanquished Britons; they were recruited from the descendants of Roman slaves, from unransomed prisoners of war, and delinquents condemned to

[1] KEMBLE, vol. ii. pp. 514–516.

[2] KEMBLE, i. 220; LAPPENBERG, i. 575; PALGRAVE, i. 29. At the end of the Anglo-Saxon period there were only 25,000 in England, according to the census in *Domesday Book*, which reckons 275,000 proprietors.

[3] It was, however, forbidden to sell them to heathens; the laws of Ethelred and Canute contain formal prohibitions in this respect.

penal servitude. The monks devoted their most strenuous exertions to the still further reduction of the number. The example of the noble Wilfrid, whose first act was to free the 250 serfs who were given him by the king of the South Saxons, along with the lands intended for his episcopal monastery, proves that they were capable of seeking the freedom of their fellow-creatures at their own expense.

Stern truth compels us to confess that this was not the case everywhere. The honest pen of monastic annalists has preserved the letter of a monk of royal Mercian blood, Brithwald, afterwards archbishop of Canterbury, in which he insists upon the deliverance of a young slave who was held in bondage by the abbot of Glastonbury. "Since I have failed," he writes to the bishop of Sherborne, "in the first entreaty I addressed to him by word of mouth in your presence, I think it my duty to send you this letter from the girl's brother, and beseech you to make the abbot accept the three hundred sols which the bearer will give you for her ransom, that she may be sent back to us, to pass the rest of her life among her own people, not in the sadness of slavery, but in the joy of freedom. He will thus lose nothing of the right he has over her."[1]

This is the only example of monastic slave-holding which I have been able to discover, and fortunately the prompt and generous amendment of the evil is to be found by the side of the evil itself. If it had been otherwise, with what authority could the monks have laboured for the extinction

[1] "Quomodo petitio mea, qua precatus sum coram te venerabilem Beornvaldum abbatem de concedenda unius captivæ puellæ . . . redemptione, in irritum, contra quod credidi, cessit . . . obsecro ut ipse omnino obtineas a prædicto abbate, quatenus . . . tradas illam huc usque perducendam, quod possit reliquum vitæ suæ spatium cum consanguineis suis, non in servitutis tristitia, sed in libertatis transigere lætitia. . . . Frater noster Beornwaldus nihil, ut æstimo, de eo quod in ea juste possedit, amittit."—*Inter Epist. S. Bonifacii*, n. 7, ed. Jaffé. It has been already seen that Archbishop Brithwald had been educated at Glastonbury before he was elected abbot of the royal monastery of Reculver. Cf. BEDE, v. 8, and HOOK, *Lives of the Archbishops*, vol. i. pp. 178 and 188.

of this plague? They neglected no means besides of diminishing the number of cases in which slavery could be legalised or tolerated. The emancipation or redemption of slaves was the work of charity which they most recommended and insisted on. Thanks to their presence in the political assemblies, provisions were introduced into the laws freeing the slaves who had been overworked by their masters, or who had been obliged to work on Sunday.[1] And by their presence at the deathbed of so many penitent sinners they were able to introduce clauses into wills which provided for the salvation of the soul of the dying, by giving freedom to the survivors. Nothing was more frequent in the *Codex Diplomaticus* of the Anglo-Saxon period than acts of manumission, and all, or almost all, stated the religious motives which produced these acts, and the religious guarantees which sanctioned them. The freed slave was offered to God before the altar of the nearest church, and then declared free in presence of the monks and the congregation of the faithful. It was upon the fly-leaf of the book of the Gospels, or some other church-book, that the charter of affranchisement was registered.[2] The first vindications of individual freedom have thus come down to us inscribed on the margin of monastic missals, as the first indications of parliamentary government appear in the gifts given to monasteries with the sanction of assembled Witans.

These glorious and persevering apostles of the laws of God neither despised nor neglected any of the rights of men. Honour and justice, humanity and pity, knowledge and reason, were placed, along with the new faith and Christian morality, under the safeguard of their precepts and their

[1] See specially the law made by Ina, by the advice of the two archbishops, Hedda and Erconwald: "Si servus operetur dominica die per præceptum domini sui, sit liber." The council of Berkhampstead condemned to a fine of eighty pence the master who compelled his serf to work on Sunday. From thence comes the name of *Freolsday*, or day of freedom, given to Sunday.—LINGARD, i. 310.

[2] KEMBLE, *Saxons in England*, vol. i. p. 225.

unwearied watchfulness. All things fair and lovely and of good report which man has a right to love and desire, after as well as before his conversion, and more warmly still, being a Christian, than when he was not so—all the natural virtues, all the legitimate aspirations of the sons of Adam—were appreciated, claimed, and defended, under the forms accessible or possible in these far-distant days, with an energy, watchfulness, and courage of which there are few examples in history by the monastic apostles of Great Britain.

I have sought out with laborious care, and related with scrupulous truthfulness, everything that could throw light on the influence of Christianity, as preached by the monks, upon the early history of the English people. I have acknowledged that here, as everywhere else, this divine religion has been too often powerless and ineffectual amid the coarse and perverse inclinations of fallen nature. But I have met at every step the brilliant victories of self-devotion and faith, of disinterestedness and purity, of true greatness, true courage, and the most magnanimous charity. And what is still more wonderful and more consoling is the total absence, not to be met with in the same degree in the most boasted ages and circumstances, of everything which degrades or compromises religion in those who teach and represent it. I assert joyfully that in the lives of so many apostles and ministers of celestial verity I have not come upon a single evidence of fanaticism, of egotism, of baseness, severity, or stupid indifference to human sufferings. The student will search in vain in the records of those forgotten lives for traces of anything narrow, sombre, or pitiless; he will find there nothing that could enslave or enervate the human heart—nothing which could wound good sense, reason, or justice—nothing which savours of that arrogant and cruel Pharisaism with which all priesthoods are attacked or threatened—nothing, in short, which does not breathe respect for the freedom of souls and the most exquisite sense of honour in all the things of God.

IV

But there is yet another result for which we owe them everlasting gratitude. The monastic missionaries, while they transformed the morals and faith of the Anglo-Saxon conquerors, did nothing to change the native genius of the Teutonic race.

They made of it a nation of Christians more fervent, more liberal, more docile, and attached to the Church, more magnificent in its gifts to monasteries, more fruitful in saintly men and women,[1] than any other contemporary nation; but they deprived it of none of its public virtues, none of its bold and energetic instincts; they did not withdraw from it an atom of its manful nature, they diminished in nothing the boldness and independence which have remained up to our own day the distinguishing characteristics of the English people.

The influence of a new faith never respected more scrupulously the unity, independence, and powerful originality of the converted race, of its language, manners, institutions, its ancient laws, and its national spirit.[2]

Augustin and Paulinus, Wilfrid and Theodore, *emissaries of Rome*, as they have been called by certain historians, and who were in reality the most direct agents, the most immediate envoys, from the Holy See which had been yet seen in Christendom, neither introduced nor attempted to introduce any essential change in the political and social institutions, so different from those of the Roman world,

[1] Without speaking of holy bishops, abbots, hermits, &c., twenty-three kings and sixty queens, princes, or princesses, sprung from the different Anglo-Saxon dynasties, are reckoned from the seventh to the eleventh century among the saints recognised by the Church. No other nation has ever furnished such a contingent.

[2] This is loyally acknowledged by the German Protestant Lappenberg (vol. i. 132, 144, 629), in contradiction to the superannuated tirades of Hume, Henry, Soames, and the *servum pecus* of their copyists in England and France.

which the Anglo-Saxon nation had brought from the shores of Germany, or found in the smoking ruins of Great Britain. Satisfied with having deposited in these brave hearts the secrets of eternity, the rules of moral life, and strength to struggle against the corruption natural to every man born of woman, they left intact the spirit of the race, so that underneath his Christian vestment the old Teuton still stood perfect and complete.

Many times already in this narrative, following the example of many other writers, we have remarked upon the singular unchangeableness of the Anglo-Saxon character. Manners, vices, virtues, laws, customs, rights, names, titles, tastes, language, spirit, even down to its sports and violent exercises, everything that the modern world admires or fears, is attracted or repelled by, in the England of to-day,[1] all is to be found in germ or flower in the England of twelve centuries ago. No nation has been less changed by time or conquest.

All the towns and almost all the villages of modern England seem to have existed from the time of the Saxons; the names and actual boundaries of parishes, counties or *shires*, with their subdivisions, their judicial and political machinery, their religious and civil life, all date back into the period between the seventh and tenth centuries.

But the names and external forms are far from being all that have endured—it is the soul, the glorious and manful soul, of the converted Saxon which reveals itself in the modern Englishman. Civil virtues altogether unknown to the enslaved Christians of Rome and Byzantium, and, above

[1] "The modern Englishman is already to be found in the Saxon. Each man in his own house, master of himself, erect and complete, with nothing to control or encroach upon him."—TAINE, *Histoire de la Littérature Anglaise*. Any who read the most faithful and complete picture I know of the political and social organisation of England—that given by M. le Play in his admirable work, *La Réforme Sociale*—will be struck with the persistence of the distinctive features of British character and institutions as they appear among the Saxons.

all, that lofty sentiment of self-respect in certain men and certain classes which is the cradle of all liberty, developed themselves in the shadow of those wonders of humility, self-abnegation, charity, and piety, of which we have spoken at such length, and formed the foundation of that public spirit and those public rights which have never ceased to grow amid all storms and eclipses. *Self-government*—that is to say, the proud independence of the free man among his fellows in the general commonwealth—and *parliamentary government*—that is, the unequal division of supreme power between the crown and the national assemblies—already existed in their essential elements. When it was needful, by a natural, though too often momentary, outburst, public freedom stepped forth, armed and invincible in the collective force of individual and local freedom. The *common law* of England, that traditional and unwritten code, "the sources of which are as unknown as those of the Nile,"[1] plunges its roots into old Saxon customs, recognised, sanctioned, and published in those assemblies which were inspired and filled up by our monks; and all charters, as well as all ulterior revolutions, have served only to define and confirm that ancient and immovable foundation of English freedom.[2]

To hearts thus tempered, and a race thus ruled, the monastic institution, under the form which it had adopted in England, must have been in sympathy and accord, even independently of the religion of which it was the fruit and ornament. The monasteries were types of those great existences, at once individual and collective, founded on a great moral idea, but supported by great landed property, which are still distinctive features of the social machinery of England; which have everywhere been one of the essential conditions of public freedom; and which seem as natural to the masculine and active genius of the ancient Teutonic races as they are alien to modern civilisation and incom-

[1] Expression used by the celebrated Lord Chief-Justice Hales.

[2] Cf. FISCHEL, *Die Verfassung Englands*, p. 25.

patible with Cæsarism. For this reason it was to be expected that a natural liking for monasteries, whose founders had brought from the heart of Roman slavery a system of common security, spontaneous freedom, and elective functions entirely in conformity with the instincts and habits of the Teutonic races, should have arisen among the Anglo-Saxons.

Hence, no doubt, sprang that inexhaustible munificence, that prodigality, so long displayed by the Anglo-Saxon royalty and nobility in its relations with the monastic orders. The possessions of the Church, which then meant, almost exclusively, the possessions of monasteries, were increased daily by new foundations, or by fresh gifts added to previously existing establishments. We have already more than once pointed out the motives of these gifts, as they are expressed in the acts of the times, or as they are made evident by study of the circumstances and arrangements which accompanied them.

A profound feeling of the instability and decay of everything human, and, above all, of material wealth;[1] humble gratitude towards God, from whom every good gift is held, and to whom a portion of His own blessings are believed to be restored by improving the condition of His ministers;[2] the desire and hope of expiating the faults of a troubled life, of redeeming the backslidings of human weakness, and

[1] "Nihil intulimus in hunc mundum, veram nec auferre quid possumus: iccirco terrenis ac caducis æterna cœlestis patriæ præmia mercanda sunt. Quapropter," &c.—Charter of Aldraed, prince of the Hwiccas, in 759, ap. *Codex Diplomat. Ævi Saxonici*, vol. i. "Universa quippe quæ hic in præsentia nisibus humanis corporaliter contemplantur, nihil esse nisi vana, caduca, transitoriaque, ex sacrorum voluminum testimoniis certissime verum patet; et tamen cum istis, æternaliter sine fine mansura alta polorum regna et vigiter florentis paradisi amœnitas mercari a fidelibus queunt. Quapropter," &c.—Charter of Offa, king of Mercia, in 779, *ibid.*

[2] "Quotiens sanctis ac venerabilibus locis vestris aliquid offerre videmur, vestra nobis reddimus, non nostra largimur. Quapropter," &c.—Charter of Ethelred, king of Essex, 692, 693, *ibid.*

of making restitution of ill-gotten wealth, either by guaranteeing the livelihood of a class of men exclusively devoted to the service of God and the practice of virtue,[1] or by securing permanent help and supply for the poor, the sick, and the forsaken; in the lack of natural heirs, the hope of creating a kind of spiritual posterity, bound to pray always for the soul of their benefactor; sometimes, as in the case of the Childe Ethelbald,[2] who was an exile before he was a king, the recollection of and gratitude for benefits received, and shelter given in the monastic sanctuary; oftener still the desire of securing for themselves and their friends a burial-place protected by holy places and holy men, and which should itself protect a religious community against the ingratitude and rapacity of the future;[3] and, in short, and always, the certainty of disposing of their lands for the advantage of the most industrious, useful, and charitable of men.

Such were the motives, legitimate and frankly confessed, which led so many Anglo-Saxon princes, lords, and rich men to despoil themselves for the benefit of monasteries. They may be all summed up in that fine text which the Church still offers yearly to our meditation: "*Concludemus eleemosynam in sinu pauperis et ipsa exorabit pro nobis.*"[4]

But as has happened everywhere and at all times, in the history of the Church as well as in that of the world, evil rose by the side of the good, and abuses came in with a strong hand under the shelter of the most salutary customs. It is undeniable that these territorial grants made to monasteries exceeded the limits of justice and reason. "*Donationes stultissimæ,*" says Bede, speaking of the gifts of the kings of Northumbria.[5] Although made and sanctioned by royal authority, in concert with that of the parliaments or

[1] LINGARD, vol. i. p. 251.
[2] See the preceding chapter.
[3] BURKE, *op. cit.*, p. 225.
[4] Prayer *Attende*, taken from Eccli. xxix. 15.
[5] See above, p. 256.

Witenagemot, they at last went so far as seriously to threaten the public peace.

This will be easily understood by recollecting the nature of landed property among the Anglo-Saxons. From the Conquest, or first establishment of laws of property, besides the *hlot* or *allods*,[1] given to the first occupants, vast territories were reserved for the public service, or for future division, the liferent of which alone could be given to free men under certain conditions. This was called *folc-land*, the land of the people, and has been justly compared to the *ager publicus* of the Romans.[2] New *allods* were taken from this, on occasion, to reward or encourage new services. Thus Benedict Biscop, the young lord who afterwards became the founder of Wearmouth and Yarrow, received from the king lands suitable to his rank, which he did not hesitate to restore to the king when he became a monk.[3] These territorial grants, whether given to laymen by hereditary right, or to religious communities, could only be granted by the king with the consent of his *witan*, and in virtue of a charter or deed resembling a book—from whence came the name of *boc-land*, or land given by book. Everything which did not continue part of the folc-land was thus designated. All donations of land made to the Church—that is to say, to monasteries—were made under this name and form. Subjects could make no other gifts, as the boc-land was the only thing in their power. Kings might detach a bit of their own boc-land to make a gift of it, as Egfrid did to Benedict Biscop;[4] but the consent of the *witan* was necessary in order to transform any portion of folc-land into a hereditary and perpetual patrimony.[5]

[1] *Lots.* [2] KEMBLE, vol. i. ch. ix. p. 289.

[3] "Cum esset Oswii regis minister, et possessionem terræ suo gradui competentem, illo donante perciperet, despexit militiam cum corruptibili donativo terrestrem."—BEDE, *Vita S. Bened.*, § 1, ap. Op. Min., ii. 140.

[4] "Ut confestim ei terram septuaginta familiarum *de suo* largitus, monasterium inibi præciperet facere."—BEDE, *Hist. Abbat.*, c. 4.

[5] LINGARD, vol. i. p. 250, and Note K, pp. 407–411.

Lands thus given to the monasteries were naturally withdrawn from those obligations relative to military service which weighed upon all landed proprietors, as is apparent from the expressions used by Bede in recording the donation made by King Oswy when he consecrated his daughter Elfleda to religious life. Besides his daughter, says the historian, he gave to the Church twelve estates of six families each, which were freed from earthly military service to furnish to the monks the means of devoting themselves to the celestial army, and praying for the eternal peace of the nation.[1]

This substitution of the spiritual combats of the celestial army for the military obligations of other Anglo-Saxon landowners was followed or accompanied by a still more important privilege conferred on the new monastic proprietors. The folc-land or public domain, when transformed into *allods* or boc-lands—that is to say, into individual property—remained subject to all the public or private burdens which weighed upon the domain, and at the same time became subject to ordinary imposts when the grant was given to laymen. But it was exempt from those burdens when given to monasteries; and when this exemption had not been duly stipulated for in the original donations, deeds were afterwards drawn out, establishing them in the possession of privileges which the pious munificence of after generations made it a duty and pleasure to confer upon the monastic churches.[2] It has been seen above that

[1] "Donatis insuper duodecim possessiunculis terrarum, in quibus ablato studio militiæ terrestris ad exercendam militiam cœlestem, supplicandumque pro pace gentis ejus æterna, devotioni sedulæ monachorum locus facultasque suppeteret." — BEDE, iii. 24. Kemble and Lingard do not hesitate to suppose that these twelve domains were taken from the folc-land and changed into boc-land for the advantage of the new monasteries. In the Anglo-Saxon translation, attributed to King Alfred, the word *possessiuncula* is translated boc-land.

[2] The *Codex Diplomaticus* contains numberless deeds which secure the land "liberam ab omnibus terrenis difficultatibus, sive a pastu regis, principis, exactoris . . . a pastu et refectione omnium accipitrum et falconum in terra Mercensium," &c.

from the end of the seventh century a council had recognised this assumed exemption of monasteries from burdens and taxes—excepting only the three tributes or obligations from which no one was excused,[1] and which regarded the expenses of military expeditions and the keeping up of bridges and of fortresses—as a general law.

The increasing number of monastic foundations, and the vast extent of territorial gifts lavished upon them, produced, at the end of about a century, an alarming result—the diminution of the military resources of the country. It was not, as has been said, that the nation became less warlike, or that a too exclusive regard for religious things had turned the kings and people of the Heptarchy from their public duties. But the number of proprietors bound to personal military service went on diminishing,—on one side, because of the change of lay lands into privileged monastic possessions; and on the other hand, by the many religious vocations which arose among the warlike nobility. The prince of the Anglo-Saxon monks, the illustrious Bede, was the first to point out this danger, with the frankness which was habitual to him. "In the midst of the peace and security which we enjoy," he wrote in 731, "many Northumbrians, some noble, some humble, put aside their arms, cut their hair, and hasten to enrol themselves in the monastic ranks, instead of exercising themselves in their military duties. The future will tell what good will result from this."[2]

Four years afterwards, in his famous letter to the archbishop of York, which we have quoted at length,[3] he expresses a much more energetic disapproval. He unveils at the same time the true character of the evil; he declares

[1] This is called in the charters "trinoda necessitas, generalis incommoditas, communis labor." See above, p. 312.

[2] "Qua arridente pace et serenitate temporum, plures in gente Northanhumbrorum, tam nobiles quam privati, se suosque liberos, depositis armis, satagunt magis, accepta tonsura, monasterialibus ascribere votis, quam bellicis exercere studiis. Quæ res quem sit habitura finem, posterior ætas videbit."—*Hist.*, v. 23.

[3] See above, pp. 253–261.

without hesitation that the defence of the country is endangered by the want of soldiers, and also by the want of public lands disposable as fiefs to the nobles or veterans. Seduced by the exemption from taxes, and advantages of every kind with which monastic property was privileged, many of the nobles had obtained from the kings and *witan* vast grants of land in order to found monasteries upon them. Sometimes foundations were actually made, but without any monastic or even Christian charter; the donors collected around them a handful of their own vassals, or of irregular monks who had been expelled from true cloisters; they then called themselves abbots, and lived, together with their wives and children, on the land extorted from the nation, with no care but that of their household and material interest. Sometimes when the grant was obtained it was made use of without any further thought of its pretended purpose, and no pretence of a monastery, even under the ludicrous conditions just described, was made. For this reason the Venerable Bede implored the king and bishops to proceed, with the aid of the national assemblies, to the complete abolition of all these fraudulent and scandalous grants.[1]

Ten years after the death of Bede the second Council of Cloveshove [2] acknowledged the justice of the great monk's complaint, but without proposing any effectual remedy for the unfortunate state of affairs which he had pointed out. This Council enjoined the bishops to visit the monasteries, "if indeed such a name can be given to houses which the tyranny of avarice, to the scandal of the Christian religion, retains in the hands of worldly persons, invested with them not by divine ordinance, but by an invention of human presumption." [3] The object of these pastoral visits was to warn

[1] The *Codex Diplomaticus* (No. 46) shows us how King Ina of Wessex took back the lands granted by Cissa to Abbot Hean and his sister the Abbess Cille: "Terram . . . reipublicæ restituit, nondum constructo monasterio in eo, nec ullo admodum oratorio erecto."

[2] See above, p. 312.

[3] "Monasteria, si tamen est fas ea ita nominare, quæ temporibus istis

the inmates of the pretended communities of the risks run by their souls, and to provide for the presence of priests in case of any deadly sickness. But nothing indicates that vigorous measures were taken against the odious abuses which produced those so-called monasteries. Ill-considered grants of public lands to false monks, or, as was much more frequent, to powerful laymen, continued with impunity to the end of the Anglo-Saxon period, causing serious disturbances in the development of the population and the condition of free men, by which the Danish and Norman invasions were facilitated.[1]

But the Council of Cloveshove had other abuses to repress besides those of secular usurpation. The illustrious Boniface, then nearly at the end of his glorious career, and whose vehement remonstrances with King Ethelbald and the primate of England had specially procured the convocation of the Council, did not content himself with stigmatising as sacrilegious persons and homicides the laymen, were they kings or earls, who called themselves abbots of these usurped monasteries.[2] He pointed out to the bishops their own failings, amongst others the national vice of drunkenness, from which even their episcopal dignity did not always protect the Anglo-Saxon bishops;[3] he also pointed out in

propter vim tyrannicæ quædam avaritiæ ad religionis Christianæ statum mullatenus immutari possent, id est a sæcularibus non divinæ legis ordinatione, sed humanæ adinventionis præsumptione, utcumque tenentur."—Cap. 5.

[1] At this period there scarcely remained perhaps an acre of folc-land that had not been changed into boc-land, under various pretexts.—KEMBLE, *l. c.*

[2] "Ille autem qui laicus homo vel imperator, vel rex, vel aliquis, præfectorum vel comitum sæculari potestate fultus, sibi per violentiam rapiat monasterium de potestate episcopi, vel abbatis, vel abbatissæ, et incipiat ipsi vice abbatis regere et habere sub se monachos et pecuniam possidere, quæ fuit Christi sanguine comparata, talem hominem nominant antiqui patres raptorem et sacrilegum et homicidam pauperum et lupum diabolum intrantem in ovile Christi et maximo anathematis vinculo damnandum ante tribunal Christi."—*Epistola ad Cuthbertum*, p. 351, ed. Hussey. No. 70, ed. Jaffé.

[3] "Fertur quoque in parochiis vestris ebrietatis malum nimis adsuetum esse, ut non solum episcopi quidam non prohibeant, sed etiam ipsi nimis bibentes inebrientur, et alios porrectis poculis majoribus cogant ut inebrientur."—*Ibid.*, p. 353.

the very cloisters themselves a culpable luxury and ridiculous abundance of ornament in the vestments of the monks; and represented to them that such childish trifles might be an introduction to excesses much more grave, to bad company, to the abandonment of reading and prayer, and even to debauchery and the loss of their souls.[1]

In accordance with the advice of their illustrious countrymen, the twelve bishops assembled at Cloveshove, in council with the king of Mercia and his nobles, forbade monks, and especially nuns, to make any change in their dress, shoes, or head-dress, which would assimilate their costume to that of the lay members of society.[2] The same Council forbade them to frequent the houses of secular persons, or to dwell in them;[3] it commanded the abbots and abbesses to neglect no means of preserving in their communities, and the schools attached to them, the love of study and reading, as the best preservative against the vanities and lusts of the world,[4] and to make of their monasteries an asylum for silence, study, prayer, and work.[5] It reproved and forbade the introduc-

[1] "Supervacuam et Deo odibilem vestimentorum superstitionem prohibere; quia illa ornamenta vestium . . . latissimis clavis, vermium imaginibus clavata adventum Antichristi . . . præcurrunt; illius calliditate, per ministros suos introducere intra claustra monasteriorum fornicationem et luxuriam clavatorum juvenum, et fœda consortia, et tædium lectionis et orationis, et perditionem animarum." I give in these two latter notes the complete text as given by Spelman in his *Concilia*, p. 259, for the end of this letter, from the word *luxuriam*, is omitted in the editions of Serrarius and Giles. No editor has yet satisfactorily explained what were the *clavi* and *vermes*, the presence of which in the costume of the monks so scandalised Boniface.

[2] "Ut vestibus consuetis, juxta formam priorum . . . deinceps utantur; nec imitentur sæculares in vestitu crurum per fasciolas, nec per coculas in circumdatione capitis modo pallii laïcorum contra morem Ecclesiæ."—Cap. 28.

[3] Cap. 29.

[4] "Ut per familias suas lectionis studium indesinenter in plurimorum pectoribus versetur . . . coerceantur et exerceantur in scholis pueri dilectionem sacræ scientiæ."—Cap. 7.

[5] "Ut sint juxta vocabulum nominis sui, honesta silentium, quietorum atque pro Deo laborantium habitacula . . . orantium, legentium, Deumque laudantium."—Cap. 20.

tion of poets, minstrels, musicians, and clowns into the religious houses; the prolonged visits of secular persons, who were allowed to penetrate into and wander about the interior of the cloister; the prolonged and luxurious meals, mingled with buffooneries;[1] and especially that fatal leaning towards drunkenness, which led not only themselves to drink to excess, but to force their lay companions to drink with them.[2]

The Council concludes this humbling enumeration of the evils which luxury and wealth had introduced into the cloister by a sort of treatise, equally marked by its eloquence and its good sense, against the false ideas which began to be general on the subject of alms, or, in other words, on the moral value of those gifts which constituted the daily increasing wealth of the monasteries. An echo of the generous protest of Bede in his letter to the archbishop of York is to be found in it.[3] Alms, says the Fathers of the Council, when joined to the appointed penance, help in obtaining from God a more prompt remission of sin, and bestowal of grace to prevent backsliding; to those who are not great sinners, it answers the purpose of ensuring in heaven the reward due to their innocence and charity. But alms are not given in order that those who receive them may give themselves up to excess in eating and drinking.[4] Nor can any alms which are given with the intention of purchasing greater licence in the future be of any efficacy to redeem even the smallest of sins. Alms are a work of pity. He who has pity in his soul must do his alms at his own expense, and not by robbing his neighbour. To offer

[1] "Non sint ludicrarum artium receptacula . . . poetarum, citharistarum, musicorum, scurrarum. . . . Non habeant sæculares quique vagandi licentiam . . . per interiora monasterii domuncula."—Cap. 20.

[2] "Ut monasteriales sive ecclesiastici ebrietatis malum non sectentur. . . . Neque alios cogant intemperanter bibere. . . . Sint convivia neque deliciis vel scurrilitatibus mixta . . . et ut . . . potationibus ebriosorum more non serviant."—Cap. 21.

[3] See above, p. 261.

[4] "Non sit quoque eleemosyna illius ad hoc esurienti data, ut se ipsum comessationibus ebrietatibusque illicitis supra modum ingurgitet."—Cap. 26.

to God gifts stained with violence and cruelty is to irritate instead of appeasing divine justice. For the wise man has said, "To give alms at the expense of the poor is like killing the son in presence of his father."[1] Even to suppose that divine justice is venal is a means of provoking it to strike severely and promptly. The common saying that certain persons give daily offerings to God in order that they may give themselves up to sin with impunity is therefore a great mistake. Those who foolishly imagine that the celestial Judge will balance their gifts against their continued crimes are blind indeed. It will be of no use to them to give their goods to God, so long as they give themselves to the devil.[2]

The Council insists at length upon the necessity of incessant preaching to all, that alms can never take the place of contrition, nor of the canonical penalties imposed for the expiation of sins. It energetically condemns those who hope to acquit themselves of their penances by the intervention of others who shall fast or sing psalms on their account—that is to say, the monks supported by their gifts. It is the flesh which has sinned which ought to be punished. To allow sinners to believe the contrary would be to ruin them by corrupt adulation. For if a man could redeem his faults by money, and satisfy the justice of God by the deeds of another, then justice would indeed be venal, and the rich would be saved more easily than the poor, in defiance of the express words of Scripture. Let no man deceive himself thus, for God deceives no man; and, as has been

[1] "Eleemosyna quæ fit ex substantia pauperum, quasi qui mactat filium in conspectu patris sui."—Eccl. xxxiv. 24.

[2] "Non ad hoc sine dubio dandæ, ut quælibet vel minima saltem peccata eo licentius cuiquam agere liceat, quo vel ipse vel alius quilibet pro eo eleemosynas faciat. . . . Ne per hoc quod venalem Dei justitiam ponat, ab eadem non solum acrius, sed citius juxta merita istius judicetur. Non sint, ut generaliter dicatur, eleemosynæ ad hoc datæ. . . . Frustra suas tantum eleemosynas et non intermixta flagitia supernum pensare judicem cæco suo libitu volunt et optant . . . sua Deo dare videntur, sed se ipsos diabolo per flagitia dare non dubitantur."—Cap. 26.

said by His Apostle, we shall all appear on the same level before the tribunal of Christ.[1]

It is thus evident that the chiefs of the Anglo-Saxon Church, who all came from the monastic order, were the first to protest against false interpretations and evil applications of the doctrine of alms. They protested at the same moment, and before the event, against the calumnies and exaggerations heaped by an unjust and ungrateful posterity upon the avarice and greed of ecclesiastical corporations, and the hypocrisies and evil influence of the cloister.

But the abuses which their watchful and paternal authority thus endeavoured to assail and repress were, without one single exception, to be attributed to the relaxation of rule which too much and too sudden wealth had introduced into the monasteries.

And all was not yet said. For this wealth brought with it other dangers besides that of internal laxity. It awakened universal covetousness. Sometimes the natural heirs of the lawful abbot of a monastery came after his death and violently seized the monastic lands, under pretence that the abbey had been the property of the deceased, and that they had a right to its inheritance, on the sole condition of supporting the monks.[2] Sometimes kings and princes installed themselves in a great monastery as in a place of rest and recreation, with all their surroundings, their train of officials, huntsmen, footmen, and grooms, who, along with horses, hawks, and dogs, had to be lodged, fed, and provided with vehicles, as is proved by the char-

[1] "Ipsa illius caro quæ illicita ac nefanda contraxit desideria, ipsam hic in præsenti punire juxta modum reatus sui debet. . . . De hoc prolixius ideo disputandum est, quia nuper quidam dives, petens reconciliationem pro magno suo facinore . . . quod superni judicis quotidie justitiam inter se quasi venalem statuere. . . . Antequam plures vestra errabunda adulatione implicantur et deducantur ad perniciem."—Cap. 27.

[2] Something of a similar character has been seen in the Irish monasteries of the family of St. Columbkill, where there were two lines of abbots, the one secular and hereditary, the other ecclesiastical and according to the rule. See vol. iii. p. 149.

ters, which, while exempting certain monasteries from this charge, prove how habitual and burdensome it had become.[1] Again, there were other kings still more exacting and formidable, who revoked the gifts made by their predecessors, and reclaimed the lands given by them; setting forth their pretensions and the counter-plea of the monks before the Witenagemot, the decisions of which were not always in conformity with the rights of the weak. The nobles and great personages, too, often followed the example of the kings—they reclaimed the lands given to the monasteries by their fathers, or seized upon others which lay at hand, leaving traces of their depredations in the many acts which enforce restitution more or less tardy, but at the same time proving that violence and rapacity had too often the advantage over the pious munificence of former benefactors.

Sometimes the prelates themselves abused their authority by making over to their relatives a portion of the conventual patrimony. In short, the local and intestinal wars which were so frequent at this period were waged specially at the expense of the monastic lands,[2] which were always the best cultivated and the most populous, and consequently offered a richer and more attractive prey to the spoiler. This fact explains the singular fluctuations of prosperity to which the monasteries were subject, though their perseverance, their laborious and economical system, their paternal care of the agricultural population, were almost always sufficient to restore their impaired fortunes. The twice-repeated accusation of St. Boniface, when, in his letters to King Ethelbald and the archbishop of Canterbury, he distinguishes England as the country in which the monks were subjected to the harshest bondage, on account of the exactions and

[1] "Pastus regum et principum, ducum et præfectorum, exactorum, equorum et falconum, accipitrum et canum . . . et omnes difficultates regalis vel sæcularis servitii."—*Codex Diplom.*, n. 288.

[2] All these causes of the ruin or deterioration of monastic property are well explained by Lingard, *Antiquities*, vol. i. pp. 226 and 253–256.

forced labour required from them by the royal officials for public buildings, is much less comprehensible. He speaks of these oppressions as of a novelty unknown under the ancient kings and in the other countries of Christendom; no trace of them is to be found in contemporary documents; but the evidence of the great Boniface, so attentive an observer of everything that concerned the Church in his native country, is too grave to be set altogether aside.[1]

Property has been in England, as elsewhere, the condition and guarantee of freedom for the Church as well as for corporations and individuals. But the burdens, the abuses, the excesses, the privileges, which property brings with it, have been in England more than anywhere else, and at all periods, the great danger of the Church; and it is upon this rock that the monastic ark has perished, drawing with it in its shipwreck the whole Catholic Church of England. In this lies a terrible mystery, a problem of which our fathers did not sufficiently understand the gravity and difficulty. To solve it would have demanded from the heads of the Church, and especially of the religious orders, an amount of discernment, moderation, and prudence easier to dream of than to find. But the reaction which raised up the holy founders of mendicant orders, and which always burns in some souls, enamoured of the primitive but transitory simplicity of the great cenobitical foundations, is but too easily imaginable. "My brethren," said the greatest monk of our century, preaching at the inauguration of one of his new establishments—"my brethren, if I knew that our house would grow rich, even by your savings, I should rise to-night and set fire to it at its four corners."

[1] "Dicitur quod præfecti et comites tui majorem violentiam et servitutem monachis et sacerdotibus irrogent, quam cæteri ante Christiani reges fecissent."—*Epist. ad Ethelbaldum*, No. 59. "De violenta quoque monachorum servitute, operibus et ædificiis regalibus, quæ in toto mundo Christianorum non auditur facta, nisi tantum in genere Anglorum: quod sacerdotibus Dei non tacendum nec consentiendum est, quod inauditum malum est præteritis seculis."—*Epist. ad Cuthbertum*, No. 70, ed. Jaffé.

V

Fatal wealth! let us repeat with this great man—fatal wealth, the daughter of charity, of faith, of a generous and spontaneous virtue, but the mother of covetousness, envy, robbery, and ruin! Scarcely a century had run since the modest and sober beginning of the Church and the monastic order in England—and already the honourable and undisputed voices of saints, such as Boniface and Bede, are raised to indicate the danger, though without perceiving its cause. The leprosy was already there. In the fulness of youth, at the height of health, the germ of mortality appeared. The day was to come when the poisonous fruit should be gathered by greedy and bloody hands. The day was to come when a monster, who resembled at once Caligula and Heliogabalus, a Henry VIII., with his cowardly courtiers and debased people, should arm himself with the pretext of the exorbitant wealth of religious corporations, in order to annihilate, and drown in blood and slavery, the work of Augustin, Wilfrid, and Bede.

I think I have a right to despise the insinuations of those who have dared to accuse me of desiring to absolve or mitigate the crime of those sacrilegious bandits—those cowardly spoilers who, in England as in all the rest of Europe, have made a prey of the patrimony of the Church. But who will not regret with me that the Church, which alone had the necessary discernment and authority, should not herself have set limits, at a suitable moment, to the unlimited increase of wealth in the monastic corporations? The increase was lawful, natural, often even involuntary, but dangerous and exorbitant. The Church could and ought to have understood this. The Church, with her supernatural insight, her divine authority, her maternal omnipotence, could and ought to have forestalled the danger by warning prohibitions, by a just division of the superfluities of great orders and rich communities, either to the advantage of the poor, of public beneficence, of the inferior and neglected clergy, or any other social service or necessity.

No man can say from what evils and crimes the world might have been spared if the Church, which was destined to be the chief victim, had been beforehand with the spoilers; had baffled their hatred and disarmed their treachery by taking from them this specious pretext; arresting with a prudent and steady hand the rising tide of ecclesiastical wealth, and saying, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no farther; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed."[1]

Disinterestedness is, above all others, the virtue of a priest; voluntary poverty has always been the unfailing source of the influence and power of monks. In this they have always been able—they will always be able—to renew and revive their strength. It was this thought that comforted the great soul of Mabillon, the most illustrious of modern Benedictines, in those generous lamentations which dropped from his pen after the narrative of the conquest of England by the monks, and which may still be applied to so many other Catholic countries which the scythe of Vandalism had not yet assailed in his day:—

"Ah! if Gregory or Augustin could but live again, and see these lands to-day! What a sad glance would they throw upon the fruits of their wasted labours, the scattered stones of the sanctuary, the house of prayer changed into the abode of desolation! It is not that we weep the lost wealth of the Church; it is not our sacked and overthrown monasteries that the Benedictines regret. No; but we groan over the fate of our brethren, rent from the bosom of the Catholic Church and rooted in heresy. God grant that we might buy their return by the price of all that might once have been ours. What would not the Church give, what would not our order sacrifice, to gain the souls of our brethren, and enrich ourselves in the poverty of Christ!"[2]

[1] JOB xxxviii. 11.

[2] "Ah! si modo in illas terras redivivi venirent Gregorius et Augustinus! quibus oculis intuerentur laborum suorum fructus dissipatos, dispersos lapides sanctuarii, et domos orationis factas domos desolationis! Neque vero lugemus amissas illic Ecclesiæ amplissimas opes . . . neque nos

It was from the Benedictine ranks, purified by toil and a frugal life, or from the bosom of other orders given by God to the Church to defend and console her, that the new missionaries came who, in the age of Mabillon, returned upon English soil, a thousand years after the companions of Augustin and the disciples of Columba. Far from being received, as their predecessors had been by the Anglo-Saxon pagans, with magnanimous and intelligent tolerance, they had nothing to expect of the Protestant English but martyrdom, often preceded by the horrors of a lengthened captivity and by tortures unknown to savages. Nevertheless, daily some monk crossed the sea, and landed disguised and by night upon the soil where Augustin and the monks of Mont Cœlius had planted in broad day the cross of Jesus Christ, now banished and denied by Christian England. Not far from the old wasted and confiscated monasteries he began, at the risk of his life, the clandestine practice of that worship which the envoys of Gregory the Great had openly celebrated; he distributed the bread of life and truth to some sheep of the little flock which had survived persecutions more atrocious and prolonged than those of Decius or Diocletian, to keep and transmit to our free and happier days the yet warm ashes of the truth. They came from France, they came from Belgium, Italy, and even from Spain, to gather these bloody laurels, striving for them with exiles of the English race. They were discovered, questioned, tortured, and then murdered, with all the refinements of infernal cruelty. Among many others, let us name a Spaniard, George Gervaise, who, captured and questioned by the judges of Mary Stuart's miserable son upon his pro-

Benedictini jam dolemus monasteria nostra direpta et eversa; sed ingemiscimus, quod fratres nostros a gremio Ecclesiæ Catholicæ avulsos et in schismate obfirmatos videamus. Utinam cessione omnium rerum, olim nostrarum, eos ad nos redituros comparare nobis liceret! Quidni Ecclesia, quidni ordo noster ultro cederet bonis, olim suis, ad lucrandos fratres, cum Christus propter nos egenus factus sit, ut nos ejus inopia ditaremur!" *Ann. Bened.*, l. ix. c. 44.

fession, answered, "I am a Benedictine monk of that order which of old converted England to the Christian faith." He renewed this profession at the foot of the gibbet on which he was hung, and from which he was taken down before he had yielded his last breath that his side might be opened, his heart torn out, and his feet cut off, in order to teach foreign monks who should venture to intrude on English soil, what sufferings should prevent their return to their native country.[1] "But," says the Spanish Benedictine who has added this tale to the glorious annals of his order, "what heart among us does not feel itself inspired by this example to suffer for Christ, and to repeat the sacred text, 'How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of those who carry good tidings, who publish peace.' Besides," continues the Castilian annalist, "if there is any undertaking which belongs above others to the order of St. Benedict, it is the mission to England, for our fathers conquered that island to Christ by their preaching and by their blood. They possessed there a crowd of monasteries, illustrious among the most illustrious in Europe. When generals and captains in arms desire to animate their soldiers for the battle, they remind them of their past exploits, of their victories, of the glory of their nation, the safety and honour of their wives and children. It seems to me that our father Benedict, from the height of heaven, speaks thus to his monks. He reminds them that England was brought within the pale of the Church by St. Gregory and the monk-apostles of that island. He commands the monks of all his congregations to return there for the honour of religion, that the faith planted by the hands of his sons may not be brought to nothing; not to forget how many souls sigh after religious life; and to carry help to our mother, the holy Church, so cruelly persecuted by heresy."[2]

[1] "Como amenaçando a los monges de España que no passen a aquella isla; por que ellos padeceran los mismos tormentos y no tendran pies para bolver a su tierra."—YEPES, *Coronica General de S. Benito*, 1609, vol. i. p. 448.

[2] YEPES, *loc. cit.*

But let us turn our saddened eyes away from that terrible future, so different, and still so distant, from the time of which we have just spoken. Notwithstanding the dangers and abuses which, in the interests of truth, must be acknowledged to have existed from the beginning of monastic missions, long centuries of faith and fervour, of union with the Roman Church and Catholic Christendom, succeeded the beautiful beginning of converted England. Abundant harvests were produced during these centuries in the furrows ploughed by the disciples of Augustin and Bede. Before it settled into the great nation which the world admires and envies, furnished with the noblest and wisest institutions that men have ever known, with a literature rich in unrivalled genius, and power greater than that of ancient Rome, England had to become the great base of operations for the spiritual conquests of the Papacy, the great centre of Christian missions. By her the Roman Church moved, enlightened, and subdued the centre and north of Europe; and it was by her means that the German and Scandinavian peoples, still plunged in the darkness of heathenism, were brought into the Christian faith.

The first-fruits of the monastic seed sown by the hand of the great monk Gregory in the bosom of the Anglo-Saxon race was the great apostle and martyr Winifrid, whose Latin name, *Bonifacius*, the benefactor, so exactly expressed his glorious career. It was he who was chosen by God to carry the light of truth, the flame of love, the spirit of martyrdom, into the cradle of his ancestors, the depths of those German forests, happily impenetrable by the enslaved Romans, from whence came the freedom, thought, and life of Catholic nations, and with these the Christian civilisation of two worlds.

BOOK XV

THE ANGLO-SAXON NUNS

"Quali colombe dal disio chiamate
Con l'ali aperte e ferme al dolce nido
Volan, per l'aer dal voler portate."

DANTE, *Inferno*, c. 5.

"Indi, como orologio che ne chiami
Nell' ora che la sposa di Dio surge
A mattinar lo sposo, perchè l'ami,
Che l'una parte e l'altra tira ed urge
Tin tin sonando con si doce nota
Che 'l ben disposto spirto d'amor turge;
Cosi vid' io la gloriosa ruota
Moversi e render voce a voce in tempra
Ed in dolezza ch' esser non può nota
Se non colà dove 'l gioir s'insempra."

Paradiso, c. 10.

"Come, pensive nun, devout and pure,
Sober, steadfast, and demure."

MILTON, *Penseroso*.

BOOK XV

THE ANGLO-SAXON NUNS

I

Convents of women as numerous and important as the monasteries of men.—Important position of women among the Teutonic races.—Contrast with the Romans of the Empire.—Among the Anglo-Saxons, descendants of the Cimbri, the influence of women even greater and happier than in other nations.—Importance of dynastic alliances.—Anglo-Saxon queens.

The Teutonic barbarians, though less corrupt than the Romans, nevertheless required an immense effort of the Christian apostles to conquer their sensual excesses.—The debt owed by women to Christianity.—The Church could only emancipate woman by the ideal of Christian virginity.—This virginity nowhere more honoured than among the Anglo-Saxons.—Influence and authority of abbesses.—They appear in the national councils.—Ceremonial of the solemn benediction of a nun.

II

Anglo-Saxon queens and princesses in the cloister.—The first nuns trained in France, at Faremoutier, Jouarre, and Chelles.—Saint Botulph and the two East Anglian princesses at Chelles.

Each dynasty of the Heptarchy supplies its share of virgins, wives, and widows.

The Northumbrian nuns already well known, except Bega.—Legend of this princess, an Irishwoman by birth.—Perpetual confusion of history and tradition.

The *Ascings* or princesses of the Kentish dynasty.—Ethelburga, queen of Northumbria, afterwards foundress of Lyminge.—Her sister Eadburga, and her niece Eanswida, foundress of Folkestone.—The legend of Domneva and her brothers.—The hind's run in the Isle of Thanet.—Great popularity of St. Mildred.—Legend of the box on the ear.—Mildred's sisters.—Milburga and the dead child.

The Mercian princesses.—The race of the cruel Penda furnished the greatest number of saints and nuns.—Three of his daughters nuns, and four of his granddaughters saints.

The *Uffings* of East Anglia.—The three daughters of King Anna who fell in battle.—Withburga and her community fed on hind's milk.—Three generations of saints of the race of Odin at Ely, which had for its three first abbesses a queen of Northumbria, a queen of Kent, and a queen of Mercia.—Wereburga, the fourth sainted abbess of Ely, and the shepherd of Weedon.

Nuns of the race of Cerdic in Wessex; the wife and sisters of King Ina.—St. Cuthburga, foundress of Winbourne.—The monastery of Frideswida, a West Saxon princess is the cradle of the University of Oxford: the kiss of the leper.

III

Literary, biblical, and classical studies among the Anglo-Saxon nuns—chiefly at Barking, under Abbess Hildelida. St. Aldhelm addresses to them his *Eulogy of Virginity*; his letters to other nuns.—Winbourne, another centre of intellectual activity.—Abbess Tetta and her five hundred nuns; the novices dance on the tomb of their mistress.

IV

Winbourne, a double monastery.—Origin of these singular institutions.—They flourished chiefly in the Irish colonies in Gaul: from thence introduced into England.—A monastery of men joined to every great abbey of women, and always governed by the abbess.—Interdicted by Archbishop Theodore.—The double monasteries disappeared after the Danish Invasion; resemblance to the boys' schools managed by young girls in the United States.—In the seventh and eighth centuries no disorders are remarked in them except at Coldingham.—What were the abuses of the Anglo-Saxon cloisters.—Splendour of dress; attempts upon the modesty of the nuns, foreseen and punished by Anglo-Saxon legislation.—Decrees of Archbishop Theodore and Egbert against the criminal relations of the clergy with nuns; their importance should not be exaggerated.

V

The letters of St. Boniface contain the surest accounts of the state of souls in the Anglo-Saxon cloisters.—All there was not calm and happiness.—Tender and impassioned character of the letters addressed by the nuns to Boniface and his companions.—The not less affectionate answers of the missionaries.—The three Buggas and the two Eadburgas.—Earnest desire to make pilgrimages to Rome.—Grievances of the Abbess Eangytha and her daughter.—How St. Lioba became connected with St. Boniface.—Other letters written to the saint by his friends: Cena, Egburga.—Lamentation of a nun for the absence of her brother.

VI

Excesses of feeling vanish before death, but death itself does not put an end to the sweet friendships of the cloister.—St. Galla.—Hilda and her friend; Ethelburga and her friend; the daughters of Earl Puch.—Visions of light.—The daughter of the king of Kent and the lay sister at Faremoutier.—The shining shroud at Barking; the extinguished lamp.

VII

History has preserved only these names, but many others have disappeared after glorifying the Church and their country.—Masculine character of these Anglo-Saxon nuns: the monastic ideal unites the types of man, woman, and child.

Conclusion.—The whole ancient Catholic world has perished except the army of sacrifice.—Number and endurance of contemporary vocations.

I

"Hark how I'll bribe you: . . .
Ay, with such gifts that heaven shall share with you;
. . . With true prayers
That shall be up at heaven and enter there
Ere sunrise—prayers from preserved souls,
From fasting maids, whose minds are dedicate
To nothing temporal."

SHAKESPEARE, *Measure for Measure.*

I HAD supposed my task at an end; but I hear the sound as of a choir of sweet and pure voices which seem to reproach me for having left in the shade one side of the great edifice which I have undertaken to reconstruct in thought. These voices have no plaintive sound. But they are full of a soft and overpowering harmony which has not been sufficiently celebrated before men. The souls whose sentiments they utter do not complain of being forgotten; it is their chosen condition and desire. They have made greater sacrifices than that of a place in the memory of men. Strength, veiled by gentleness, is in their very breath. Their appearance in history is characterised by something clear and firm, sober yet animated, as well as by that sacrifice of life in its flower, which is of all things in the world the most touching. These are the daughters of the Anglo-Saxon kings and lords, and with them, a true nation of virgins, voluntary prisoners of the love of God,[1] and consecrated to monastic life in cloisters which rival in number and influence the monasteries of men, the most important centres of Christian life.

We have already seen how, outside their communities, and mingled in the current of the historical events of their time, several of those vigorous women, those wise virgins

[1] "That voluntary prison into which they threw themselves for the love of God."—BOSSUET, *Exorde du Sermon sur Jesus Christ comme Sujet de Scandale.*

and spiritual warriors, have left their trace in the history of their country. But such isolated figures do not suffice for an attentive study of the state of souls and things in times so distant. Account must be made of other personages of the same order, and above all as much as is possible of the feminine army which is arrayed by the side of those queens and princesses. The crowd must be penetrated in any attempt to trace this fruitful and powerful branch of the monastic family, and in default of exact and precise details, which are rarely to be found, an effort, at least, must be made to seize the salient points, and to bring out such features of their life as may touch or enlighten posterity.

And, in the first place, to give any exact representation of the Anglo-Saxon nuns as they appeared in their own consciousness and to the eyes of their countrymen, the important part played by women among the Teutonic races must be borne in mind. Nothing had more astonished the Romans than the austere chastity of the German women;[1] the religious respect of the men for the partners of their labours and dangers, in peace as well as in war; and the almost divine honours with which they surrounded the priestesses or prophetesses, who sometimes presided at their religious rites, and sometimes led them to combat against the violators of the national soil.[2] When the Roman world, undermined by corruption and imperial despotism, fell to pieces like the arch of a *cloaca*, there is no better indication of the difference between the debased subjects of the Empire and their conquerors than that sanctity of conjugal and domestic ties, that energetic family feeling, that worship of pure blood,

[1] "Severa illic matrimonia: nec ullam morum partem magis laudaveris. . . . Ne se mulier extra virtutum cogitationes, extraque bellorum casus putet, ipsis incipientis matrimonii auspiciis admonetur, venire se laborum periculorumque sociam, idem in pace, idem in prælio passuram ausuramque. . . . Paucissima in tam numerosa gente adulteria."—TACIT., *De Mor. German.*, c. 18, 19.

[2] *Ibid.*, c. 8. Cf. CÆSAR, *De Bell. Gall.*, i. 50, 51.

which are founded upon the dignity of woman, and respect for her modesty, no less than upon the proud independence of man and the consciousness of personal dignity. It is by this special quality that the barbarians showed themselves worthy of instilling a new life into the West, and becoming the forerunners of the new and Christian nations to which we all owe our birth.

Who does not recall those Cimbri whom Marius had so much trouble in conquering, and whose women rivalled the men in boldness and heroism? Those women, who had followed their husbands to the war, gave to the Romans a lesson in modesty and greatness of soul of which the future tools of the tyrants and the Cæsars were not worthy. They would surrender only on the promise of the consul that their honour should be protected, and that they should be given as slaves to the vestals, thus putting themselves under the protection of those whom they believed virgins and priestesses. The great beginner of democratic Dictatorship refused: upon which they killed themselves and their children, generously preferring death to shame.[1] The Anglo-Saxons came from the same districts, bathed by the waters of the Northern Sea, which had been inhabited by the Cimbri,[2] and showed themselves worthy of descent from them, as much by the irresistible onslaught of their warriors as by the indisputable power of their women. No trace of the old Roman spirit which put a wife *in manu*, in the hand of her husband, that is to say, under his feet, is to be found among them. Woman is a person and not a thing. She lives, she speaks, she acts for herself, guaranteed against the least outrage by severe penalties, and protected by universal respect. She inherits, she disposes of her possessions—sometimes even she deliberates, she fights, she governs, like the most proud and

[1] FLORUS, l. iii. c. 3.

[2] "Proximi Oceano Cimbri tenent, parva nunc civitas, sed gloria ingens." —*De Moribus German.*, c. 37. Jutland, Schleswig, and Holstein, from whence came the Jutes, Angles, and Saxons, bore the name of the Cimbric Chersonese.

powerful of men.[1] The influence of women has been nowhere more effectual, more fully recognised, or more enduring than among the Anglo-Saxons, and nowhere was it more legitimate or more happy.

From the beginning of Christianity women everywhere became, as has been seen at every page of this narrative, the active and persevering, as well as daring and unwearied, assistants of the Christian apostles; and when the conversion of the race was complete, no Fredigond appeared, as among the Gallo-Franks, to renew the evil behaviour of the Roman empresses. If there existed among these queens and princesses certain violent and cruel souls, there was not one who could be accused of loose morals or immodest inclinations. The national legend is here in perfect accord with the monastic, and popular tradition with history. From the beautiful Rowena, sister of the first conqueror, Hengist, to the famous Countess Godiva—from the daughter of Ethelbert, who carried the faith into Northumbria, to the wife of Ina, who procured the conversion of her husband—we encounter, with few exceptions, only attractive and generous figures, in whom beauty and modesty meet together, and the gentleness natural to woman is allied with an energy which reaches heroism.

From this fact arises the extreme importance attached by the Anglo-Saxons to matrimonial alliances which united among themselves the various sovereign dynasties, and the nations or tribes whose local independence and glorious recollections were personified by them. These unions, by renewing periodically the ties of a common nationality, gave to the princesses of the race of Odin the office of mediatrix and peacemaker to a degree which justifies the

[1] In this respect there was no difference between the victors and the vanquished. Women had always occupied an important place among the Britons, and often reigned and fought at their head; witness Boadicea, immortalised by Tacitus. Free women, married and possessing five acres of land, voted in the public assemblies of the *clans* or tribes of Britain.—*Ancient Laws of Cambria*—ap. PALGRAVE and LAPPENBERG.

touching surname given to woman in the primitive poetry of the Anglo-Saxons, where she is described as *freodowebbe*, she who weaves the links of peace.[1]

Thence, too, arose the great position held by the queens in all the states of the Anglo-Saxon confederation. Possessing a court, legal jurisdiction, and territorial revenue on her own account,[2] surrounded with the same homage, sometimes invested with the same rights and authority as the sovereign, his wife took her place by his side in the political and religious assemblies, and her signature appeared in acts of foundation, in the decrees of the councils and in the charters, sometimes followed by those of the king's sisters or other princesses of the royal house. Sometimes these royal ladies, associated, as they were among the Teutons of whom Tacitus speaks, in all their husbands' cares, labours, and dangers, gave all their efforts, like Ermenilda of Mercia, to the conversion of a still heathen kingdom;[3] sometimes, like Sexburga in Wessex, they exercised the regency with full royal authority and almost manly vigour.[4] There is no instance of a woman reigning alone by hereditary right or by election. But the mysterious act which ended the days of the Northumbrian Osthryda,[5] queen of the Mercians, reminds us that we are in the country where Mary Stuart, the first who ever lost a crowned head on a scaffold, was to

[1] *Beowulf*, verse 3880.

[2] LAPPENBERG, vol. i. p. 564.

[3] See above, vol. iii. p. 418.

[4] Sexburga, widow of the king of Wessex, Kinewalk, was made Queen-Regent by her husband at his death in 673. "Nec deerat mulieri spiritus ad obeunda regni munia. Ipsa novos exercitus moliri, veteres tenere in officio, ipsa subjectos clementer moderari, hostibus minaciter infremere, prorsus omnia facere, ut nihil præter sexum discerneres. Verumtamen plus quam femineos animos anhelantem vita destituit, vix annua potestate perfunctam."—GUILL. MALMESB., i. 32; RIC. CIRENC., ii. 40.

[5] "A suis, id est Merciorum primatibus, interempta."—BEDE, v. 24. "Crudeliter necaverunt."—MATTH. WESTMONAST., ad. ann. 696. See in vol. iii. p. 368; vol. iv. pp. 74, 81, what we have said of her, and her devotion to her uncle, St. Oswald, and her husband Ethelred, the friend of Wilfrid, who abdicated to become a monk at Bardeney.

prove that women were there destined to all the greatness and all the calamities of supreme power.

At the same time, it would be a strange delusion to suppose that the traditional respect shown by the Teutonic races to woman, or to certain women, was sufficiently strong or universal to restrain all the excesses of the most formidable passion and most imperious instinct of fallen humanity among the Anglo-Saxons. Of all the victories of Christianity there is none more salutary and more necessary, and at the same time none more hardly and painfully won, than that which it has gained, gained alone and everywhere, though with a daily renewed struggle, over the unregulated inclinations which stain and poison the fountains of life. Its divinity here shows itself by a triumph which no rival philosophy, no adverse doctrine, has ever equalled, or will ever aspire to equal. No doubt the barbarians, according to the testimony of the Fathers, were more chaste than the Romans of the Empire. To succeed in introducing a respect for modesty and priestly celibacy in the midst of the corruptions of Imperial Rome—to raise in the midst of the universal debasement the type of virginity consecrated to God—religion needed an amount of strength, majesty, and constancy which the terrible wrestle maintained for three centuries could alone have given to it.

Neither was it a brief or easy enterprise to offer and place the yoke of continence upon the shoulders of a barbarous race, in proportion as they seized their prey and established themselves as masters of the future. It was a glorious and painful task to struggle day by day in that terrible confusion, in the desperate obscurity of the tempest, against an innumerable band of victors, inflamed by all the lusts of strength and conquest, and poisoned even by contact with their victims. The struggle was long, glorious, difficult, and triumphant. It was no longer the unnatural debauchery and monstrous orgies of the Roman Empire which had to be denounced; but there remained the vile

and gross inclinations, the brutally disordered appetites of human and savage nature. There are excesses and crimes which, though not set forth in the pages of Petronius and Suetonius, though seen only in glimpses through the articles of a penitentiary, the canons of a council, the mutilated text of a legend or chronicle, reveal no less gulfs of shame and sorrow. The Teutons were more respectful than the Orientals or Romans to those women whom they considered their own equals or superiors; but who shall say what was the fate of those of inferior condition, and especially of the unfortunates hidden in the dreary darkness of slavery or serfdom? Who shall say what were the sublime and for ever unknown efforts which were made by the priests of a God of purity to wrest so many young captives, so many slave or serf girls, from the harems of princes, from the pitiless passion of victorious warriors, and the tyrannical caprices of their masters? God alone knows these efforts, God alone has rewarded them. Attentive and sincere history can but note the general result, which was immense and glorious.

Christian civilisation has triumphed, and its triumph rests, above all, upon respect for the wife, virgin, and mother—that transfigured woman of whom the mother of God has become the type and guardian in Christian nations.[1]

It is Christianity which has armed woman with her own weakness, and made of it her strength—a strength more august and respected than any other: "When I am weak, then am I strong." The Christian religion has been the true country of woman; the only one in which she has found her true freedom, her true destiny, coming out of Egyptian bondage, escaping from paganism, from savage life, or from the still more shameful debasement of civilised depravity. This also, and this alone, could give a free field to all the virtues which are characteristically her own, those which make her not only equal but often superior to man—generosity, the heroism of patience and self-devotion, suffer-

[1] See *L'Histoire de Sainte Elisabeth*, Introduction, pp. 76, 134.

ing accepted for the help of others, victory over selfishness, and the sacrifice of pride to love. This work of atonement and salvation, which is the only true emancipation of woman, and, by her, of virtue and the soul, has been the work of the Church with the aid of the Teutonic race.

And the Church has done this work only by elevating above and beyond the level of virtue, which women in general can reach, that ideal of moral virtue and beauty which can be realised only by virginity consecrated to God. She has raised this ideal above the virtues most admired and most worthy to be admired among the ancient nations, even among the Jews, where fruitfulness was a woman's supreme glory. She has given embodiment, discipline, law, a soul, an inextinguishable light, to the confused notions spread throughout antiquity; she has transformed into a splendid and immortal army those little groups of vestals, sibyls, and Druidesses which were scattered through the heathen world. Respect for modesty, which among the most generous nations was the privilege of a small and chosen number, she has brought to be the inviolable inheritance of every human creature: at the same time she has made the privileged state of virginity consecrated to God to be the common dowry of Christendom, the lawful and supreme ambition of the poorest child of the people, as well as of the daughter of kings; and for eighteen centuries she has drawn from all countries and conditions myriads of chaste and radiant creatures, who have rushed to her altars, bringing their heart and life to God, who became man in order to redeem them.

Our Anglo-Saxons were neither the last nor the least instruments of this glorious transformation. Amid all the overflowings of their natural intemperance, they had preserved the instinct and a sense of the necessity of veneration for things above: they could, at least, honour the virtues which they would not or could not practise. The spectator stands amazed at the crowd of neophytes of both sexes who

came from all the races of the Heptarchy, to vow themselves to perpetual continence. None of the new Christian nations seem to have furnished so great a number; and among none does Christian virginity seem to have exercised so prompt and so supreme an influence. The young Anglo-Saxon women who gave themselves to God—though they were initiated into the life of the cloister in the Gallo-Frankish monasteries, which had the advantage of being sooner established than those of England—had to return to their own island to realise their own value in the eyes of their countrymen.

The Anglo-Saxon conquerors regarded with tender and astonished respect the noble daughters of their race, who appeared to them surrounded by an unknown, a supernatural grandeur, and power at once human and divine—victorious over all the passions, all the weaknesses and lusts, of which victory had but developed the germs. This respect soon became apparent in the national laws, which agreed in placing under the safeguard of severe penalties the honour and freedom of those upon whom Anglo-Saxon legislation bestowed the title of *brides of the Lord* and *spouses of God*.[1]

When one of these holy maidens found herself invested, by the choice of her companions or the nomination of a bishop, with the right of governing and representing a numerous community of her companions, the chiefs and people of the Heptarchy accorded her, without hesitation, all the liberties and attributes of the most elevated rank. The abbesses, as we have seen by the example of Hilda, Ebba, and Elfleda, had soon an influence and authority which rivalled that of the most venerated bishops and abbots. They had often the retinue and state of princesses, especially when they came of royal blood. They treated with kings, bishops, and the greatest lords on terms of perfect equality; and as the rule of the cloister does not seem to

[1] "*Godes bryde.*"—THORPE'S *Ancient Laws of England*, vol. ii. pp. 188, 206, 207.

have existed for them, they are to be seen going where they please,[1] present at all great religious and national solemnities, at the dedication of churches, and even, like the queens, taking part in the deliberations of the national assemblies, and affixing their signatures to the charters therein granted. The twenty-third article of the famous law or *dooms* of Ina sets, in certain points, not only abbots but abbesses on the same level with kings and the greatest personages of the country.[2] In the Council of Beccancelde, held in 694 by the bishop and king of Kent, the signatures of five abbesses appear in the midst of those of the bishops, affixed to decrees intended to guarantee the inviolability of the property and freedom of the Church.[3]

[1] The reader may remember the meeting appointed by the Abbess Elfleda of Whitby with St. Cuthbert at Coquet Island, and also the festival to which she invited the same bishop on the dedication of a church built on one of her estates. See vol. iv. pp. 65, 151.

[2] "Si homo alienigena occidatur, habeat rex duas partes *were* suæ et terciam partem habeant filii vel parentis sui. Si parentes non habeat, dimidiam habeat rex, dimidiam consocii. Si autem abbas *vel abbatissa* intersit, dividant eodem modo cum rege."—THORPE'S *Ancient Laws and Institutes of England*, pp. 471–500, fol. ed.

[3] This is the council mentioned above, p. 310, and which is also known under the names of Bapchild and Beckenham : the king who presided at it, Withred, reigned thirty-three years. The decrees were given by the votes of the archbishop of Canterbury, the bishop of Rochester, "cum abbatibus, *abbatissis*, presbyteris, diaconibus, ducibus, et satrapis."—WILKINS, *Concilia*, i. p. 47. In Coletti, vol. viii. p. 79, there are five signatures of abbesses:—

Signum manus : Mildredæ, abbatissæ.
„ „ Etheldridæ, abbatissæ.
„ „ Aetæ, abbatissæ.
„ „ Wilnodæ, abbatissæ.
„ „ Hereswidæ, abbatissæ.

The other signatures are those of the king and queen Werburga for their infant son, afterwards of two princes or lay lords, of the archbishop, the two bishops, and seven priests; there are no abbots. Kemble, vol. ii. p. 198, maintains that all signatures of women, other than queens, which are found attached to certain rare charters, must be those of abbesses summoned to attend assemblies where there might be question of the interests of their communities. Lingard (vol. i. p. 239) is more sceptical on this subject.

How were the monasteries filled whose superiors occupied so elevated a rank in the spiritual and temporal hierarchy of the Anglo-Saxons, and what was their life? This question it will be both important and difficult to answer.

No contemporary writer has left us a complete authentic picture of the interior of the great Anglo-Saxon communities. No indisputable document is in existence which brings before us the system of rules and customs followed by thousands of nuns who wore the black robe and veil of the spouses of the Lord. We are reduced to the scanty incidents which are to be found in the history of the time, in that of the reigning families from which came most of the principal abbesses, and specially from the biographies of the most holy or most celebrated among these illustrious women. But by contrasting these incidents with those which reveal to us the origin and result of similar vocations among all the other Christian nations, by lighting them up with the light which shines in history, from the commencement of Christianity, we arrive at a point of comprehension perhaps satisfactory enough, but with which at least we must content ourselves.

In the absence of any existing record of their special rules and customs, the liturgical remains of the Anglo-Saxon Church reveal to us the spirit which animated both the pontiffs and the novices by whom these great and frequent sacrifices were made. There, as everywhere else, under the ancient discipline, it was the bishop, and he alone, who had the right of receiving the final vows of the virgin and of consecrating her solemnly to God. Although the Irish, with their habitual rashness, permitted girls to take the veil at the age of twelve,[1] the Anglo-Saxon Church forbade the taking of the irrevocable vows until after the twenty-fifth year had been accomplished, in accordance with a custom which began to prevail in the whole Church, and which was a modification of the decrees of the Pope St. Leo

[1] MARTENE, *De Antiquis Ecclesiæ Ritibus*, lib. ii. c. 6, vol. iii. p. 109.

and the Emperor Majorian, who had deferred to the age of forty the reception of the solemn benediction. On the day fixed for that ceremony, which took place only at the principal festivals of the year, and in presence of a numerous assemblage, the bishop began by blessing the black robe which was henceforward to be the sole adornment of the bride of God. The novice put it on in a private room,[1] from which she came forth, thus clothed, and was led to the foot of the altar after the reading of the Gospel; the officiating bishop having already begun to say mass. There she listened to his exhortation; after which he asked for two public engagements which were indispensable to the validity of the act: in the first place, the consent of the parents and other guardians of the novice; and in the second place, her own promise of obedience to himself and his successors. When this had been done he laid his hands upon her to bless her and consecrate her to the God whom she had chosen. The Pontifical of Egbert, archbishop of York, and an Anglo-Saxon manuscript found in the Norman abbey of Jumiéges, have preserved to us the prayers used by the bishop at this supreme moment. The maternal tenderness of the Church overflows in them with a fulness and majesty which recall the *Menées* of the Greek Church to such a degree that it might be supposed old Archbishop Theodore, the contemporary of Egbert's most illustrious predecessor, had brought from the depth of Asia Minor into the Northumbrian capital this ardent breath of Oriental inspiration.

"May God bless thee, God the creator of heaven and earth, the Father all-powerful, who has chosen thee as He chose St. Mary, the mother of our Lord Jesus Christ, to preserve thy virginity entire and spotless, as thou hast promised before God and the angels. Persevere then in thy resolutions and keep thy chastity with patience, that thou mayest be worthy of the virgin's crown.

[1] "De papilione aut loco ubi benedictas vestes induerant, accersebantur per archipresbyterum virgines consecrandæ."

"May God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit bless thee with all blessings, that thou mayest remain immaculate and perfect under the robe of St. Mary, the mother of Christ. May the Spirit of God, the Spirit of wisdom and strength, of knowledge and piety, rest upon thee and fill thee with the fear of God. May He deign to establish thy frailty, fortify thy weakness, confirm thy strength, govern thy soul, direct thy steps, inspire thy thoughts, approve thy acts, complete thy works; may He edify thee by His charity, illuminate thee by His knowledge, keep thee by His mercy, exalt thee by His holiness, strengthen thee by patience, bring thee to obedience, prostrate thee in humility, encourage thee in continence, teach thee frugality, visit thee in infirmity, relieve thee in sadness, reanimate thee in temptation, moderate thee in prosperity, soften thee in anger, protect thy modesty, correct thy sins, pardon thy backslidings, and teach the discipline which shall lead thee, strong in all virtue and resplendent in good works, to do everything in view of the eternal reward! Mayest thou always have for thy witness Him whom thou shalt one day have for thy judge, that when thou enterest into the bridal chamber with thy lamp lighted in thy hand, thy divine Spouse may find in thee nothing impure and sordid, a soul white as snow, and a body shining with purity; so that at the terrible day of judgment the avenging flame may find nothing to consume in thee, and divine mercy find everything to crown! Mayest thou, purified in this world by monastic life, rise to the tribunal of the eternal King, to dwell in His celestial presence with the hundred and forty-four thousand innocents who follow the Lamb wherever He goes, singing the new song, and receiving the reward of thy labours here below in the dwelling-place of those who live for ever.[1] Blessed be thou from the highest heaven by

[1] "Fragilem solidet, invalidam roboret, validamque confirmet, pietate allevet, miseratione conservet, mentem regat, vias dirigat, cogitationes sanctas instituat, actus probet, opera perficiat, caritate ædificet,

Him who came to die upon the cross to redeem the human race, Jesus Christ our Saviour, who lives and reigns for ever with the Father and the Holy Spirit."

The bishop then placed the veil[1] on her head, saying, "Maiden, receive this veil,[2] and mayest thou bear it stainless to the tribunal of Jesus Christ, before whom bends every knee that is in heaven and earth and hell."

sapientia illuminet, castitate muniat, scientia instruat, fide confirmet, in virtute multiplicet, in sanctitate sublimet, ad patientiam præparet, ad obedientiam subdat, in humilitate prosternat, ad continentiam det fortitudinem, reddat sobriam, protegat pudicam, in infirmitate visitet, in dolore relevet, in tentatione erigat, in conversatione custodiat, in prosperitate temperet, in iracundia mitiget, iniquitatem emendet, infundat gratiam, remittat offensa, tribuat disciplinam, ut his et his similibus virtutibus fulta et sanctis operibus illustrata, illa semper studeas agere, quæ digna fiant in remuneratione. Illum habeas testem quem habitura es judicem; et aptare, ut præfulgentem gestans in manu lampadem, intratura sponsi thalamum occurras venienti cum gaudio, et nihil in te reperiat fœtidum, nihil sordidum, nihil incultum, nihil corruptum, nihil inhonestum, sed niveam et candidam animam corpusque lucidum atque splendidum; ut cum dies ille tremendus, remuneratio justorum retributioque malorum advenerit, non inveniat in te ultrix flamma quod uret sed divina pietas quod coronet, quæ jam in hoc sæculo conversatio religiosa mundavit, ut tribunal æterni regis ascensura celsa palatia cum eisdem merearis portionem qui sequuntur Agnum, et cantant canticum novum sine cessatione, illic preceptura præmium post laborem, semperque maneas in viventium regione atque ipse benedicat te de cœlis, qui per crucis passionem humanum genus est dignatus venire in terris redimere Jesus Christus, Dominus noster, qui," &c.—MARTENE, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

[1] The veil was sometimes white, as is apparent from the following service, *De Virgine Vestienda*, taken from an Irish manuscript, in the Library of Zurich, and quoted in the *Missal of Arbuthnott* of Dr. Forbes, p. xiv. (Burntisland, 1864):—

"Oremus, fratres carissimi, misericordiam ut cunctum bonum tribuere dignetur huic puellæ N. quæ Deo votum candidam vestem perferre cum integritate coronæ in resurrectione vitæ æternæ quam facturus est, orantibus nobis, prestet Deus.

"Conserva, Domine, istius devotæ pudorem castitatis, dilectionem continentiæ in factis, in dictis, in cogitationibus. Per te, Christe Jesu, qui, &c.

"Accipe, puellam, pallium candidum, quod perferas ante tribunal Domini."

[2] "Accipe, puella, vel vidua, pallium."—MARTENE, *op. cit.*, p. 117. It is evident that these formulas were used at the consecration of widows as well as of virgins.

Then he continued: "O God, who deignest to inhabit chaste forms, and lovest the virgin soul; God who hast renewed humanity corrupted by the fraud of the devil, and re-established it by the creating Word, so as not only to restore it to primitive innocence, but to procure it everlasting possessions, and to raise it from the bosom of creatures still bound with the chains of this life, to a level with the angels:

"Look upon Thy servant here present, who, placing in Thy hand the resolution to live for ever in chastity, offers to Thee the devotion with which this vow has inspired her. Give to her, Lord, by Thy Holy Spirit, a prudent modesty, a benevolent wisdom, a sweet gravity, a chaste freedom.[1] How could a soul imprisoned in this mortal flesh have vanquished the law of nature, the liberty of licence, the strength of habit, the pricks of youth, hadst Thou not lighted in her the flame of virginity, didst Thou not Thyself nourish the flame by the courage which Thou deignest to inspire her with? Thy grace is spread throughout all nations under the sun, which are as many as the stars in number; and among all the virtues which Thou hast taught to the heirs of Thy New Testament, one gift flows from the inexhaustible fountain of Thy generosity upon certain persons which, without diminishing in anything the honour of marriage, and the blessing which Thou hast promised on the conjugal tie, enables those higher souls to disdain all mortal union, to aspire to the sacrament which unites Jesus Christ to His Church, to prefer the supernatural union of which marriage is the emblem to the natural reality of marriage. This blessed virgin has known her Creator, and, emulating the purity of the angels, desires to belong only to Him who is the Spouse and the Son of perpetual virginity. Protect then, Lord, her who implores Thy help, and who comes here to be consecrated by Thy blessing. Let not the ancient enemy, who is so skilful to turn aside the most excellent

[1] "Sit in ea . . . prudens modestia, sapiens benignitas, gravis lenitas, casta libertas."—MARTENE, p. 119.

desires by the most insidious assaults, ever succeed in withering in her the palm of perfect maidenhood.

"Grant, Lord, by the gift of Thy Spirit, that she may keep the faith which she has sworn to Thee, that at the unknown day of Thy coming, far from being troubled, she may go forth to meet Thee in all security, and enter freely with the choir of wise virgins by the royal gates of Thy eternal dwelling-place."[1]

At the conclusion of the mass the pontiff pronounced upon the new nun a new benediction, which was turned by the acclamations of the people into a kind of dialogue.

"Send, Lord, Thy heavenly blessing upon Thy servant here present, upon our sister, who humbles herself under Thy hand, and cover her with Thy divine protection."

And all the people answered, Amen.

The Bishop.—May she ever flee from sin, know and

[1] "Deus castorum corporum benignus habitator. . . . Respice super hanc famulam tuam N. quæ in manu tua continentiæ suæ propositum collocans, tibi devotionem suam offert, a quo et ipsa idem votum assumpsit. Quando enim animus mortali carne circumdatus, legem naturæ, libertatem licentiæ, vim, consuetudinis, et stimulos ætatis evinceret, nisi tu hanc flammam virginitatis, vehementer accenderes tu hanc cupiditatem in ejus corde benignus aleres, ut fortitudinem ministrares? Effusa namque in omnes gentes gratia tua, ex omni natione, quæ est sub cœlo, in stellarum innumerabilem numerum, novi Testamenti hæredibus adoptatis, inter cæteras virtutes, quas filiis tuis non ex sanguinibus, neque ex voluntate carnis, sed de tuo spiritu genitis indidisti, etiam hoc donum in quasdam mentes de largitatis tuæ fonte defluxit, ut cum honorem nuptiarum nulla interdicta minuissent, et super conjugalem copulam tua benedictione permaneret; existerent tamen sublimiores animæ, quæ non concupiscerent quod habet mortale connubium; sed hoc eligerent quod promisit divinum Christi Ecclesiæ sacramentum: nec imitarentur quod nuptiis agitur, sed diligerent quod nuptiis prænotatur. Agnovit auctorem suum beata virginitas, et æmula integritatis angelicæ, illius thalamo illius cubiculo se devovit, qui sic perpetuæ integritatis est sponsus, quemadmodum perpetuæ virginitatis est filius. Imploranti ergo auxilium tuum, Domine, et confirmari se benedictionis tuæ consecratione cupienti, da protectionis tuæ munimen et regimen, ne hostis antiquus qui excellentiora studia, subtilioribus infestat insidiis, ad obscurandam perfectæ continentiæ palmam per aliquam mentis serpat incuriam, et rapiat de proposito virginum quod etiam moribus decet inesse nuptarum."—MARTENE, p. 118.

desire what is good, and win the sacred treasures of heaven.

People.—Amen.

Bishop.—May she always obey the divine precepts, escape with their aid from the violent rebellions of the flesh, vanquish depraved voluptuousness by the love of chastity, keep always in her lamp the oil of holiness, and delight herself in the radiance of eternal light.

People.—Amen.

Bishop.—May she ever carry in her hand the sacred fire, and thus enter at the royal gate of heaven, in the footsteps of Christ, to live for ever with wise and spotless souls.

People.—Amen.

Bishop.—May He whose empire is without end grant our prayers.

People.—Amen.

Bishop.—The blessing of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit rest upon thee, my sister, hereafter and for ever.

People.—Amen.[1]

II

The number of bishops being so small, and the ever-increasing multitude of nuns so great, it is doubtful whether these touching and solemn services could be used in the case of all the virgins consecrated to the Lord in the Anglo-

[1] "Effunde, Domine, benedictionem cœlestem super hanc famulam, sororem nostram N. . . . quæ se humiliavit sub dextera tua.

"Protege eam protectione tua divina. Amen.

"Fugiat universa delicta, sciat sibi bona desideria præparata, ut regni cœlestis sancta conquirat lucra. Amen.

"Pareat semper divinis præceptis, ut te adjuvante vitet incendia carnis, omnemque libidinem pravæ voluptatis superet amore castitatis, habeat in se oleum sanctitatis, et lætetur cum lampadibus sempiternis. Amen.

"Gestet in manibus faces sanctas, et apud sapientes et castissimas animas, duce Christo, introire mereatur januam regni cœlestis. Amen.

"Quod ipse præstare dignetur, cujus regnum et imperium sine fine permanet in sæcula sæculorum."—MARTENE, *op. cit.*, p. 121. Cf. LINGARD, *Antiquities*, vol. ii. p. 14.

Saxon cloisters.[1] But it may be believed that they were never omitted when a maiden or widow of one of the reigning dynasties of the blood and race of Odin sought the veil of the spouses of the Lord.

For in England as elsewhere, and perhaps more than elsewhere, the nuns were at the same time of the highest and of the humblest classes. Some were born of those conquering and sovereign races whose exploits have been reviewed, in which the blood of the Merovingians sometimes mingled with that of the offspring of the Norse Olympus, and which, by intermarrying always among themselves, maintained in all its native purity the character of the descendants of Odin—

"Du sang de Jupiter *issues* des deux côtés,"—

they summed up in themselves all that their countrymen held in highest esteem as greatness and majesty.

But beside them, and sometimes above, when placed there by the election of communities, appears the daughter of the obscure Saxon, of the *ceorl*, perhaps even of the conquered Briton; and others from a still greater distance and lower level, redeemed from slavery and withdrawn from outrage, from the stains which were the too frequent consequence of captivity. All marched under the same banner, that of sacrifice; all bore its glorious mark. Some gave up a crown, wealth, and greatness; others their family, their love, their freedom; all had to give up themselves. The meanest in birth were certainly not those to whom the sacrifice was the most costly. It is too probable that these Anglo-Saxon princesses and great ladies were naturally haughty and insolent, hard and unkindly to the rest of

[1] No. 92 of the *Excerptiones* of Archbishop Egbert renews the prohibition of Pope Gelasius to give the veil to nuns at any other time than the feasts of Epiphany, Easter, or the feasts of the Apostles, unless the novice was dying.

mankind—in some cases bloodthirsty and pitiless, like the heroines of the Teutonic epic, Chriemhild and Brunehild; and of all the miracles wrought by Christianity in England, there is scarcely any more wonderful than the transformation of so great a number of such women, in the new communities, into docile daughters, cordial sisters, mothers truly tender and devoted to their inferiors in age and blood.

It must be acknowledged that the observation of the chroniclers of those distant centuries rarely goes beyond the queens and princesses, whose religious vocation must have specially edified and touched the souls of their contemporaries; and who, beautiful, young, and sought in marriage by princes of rank equal to their own, gave up the world to keep their love entire for God, and to consecrate so many places of refuge at once peaceful and magnificent for future generations of God's servants.

In respect to the maidens of humbler origin, but of life as pure and self-devotion as dauntless, who surround the greater personages of our tale, we can but follow the ancient authors, taking advantage of every indication which throws light upon the life and soul of so great a multitude.

The queens and princesses range themselves into three principal classes. They were, in the first place, virgins devoted to God, sometimes from the cradle, like the abbesses Ebba of Coldingham and Elfleda of Whitby, who were the devoted friends and protectresses of Wilfrid. Then followed wives who separated themselves from their husbands, during their lifetime, and often much against their will, to embrace a religious life: of this class St. Etheldreda is the most celebrated example. And finally, widows who ended in the cloister a life mostly devoted on the throne to the active extension as well as the self-sacrificing practice of the new religion. We have seen more than one touching example of the last-named class—such as that of Queen Eanfleda, the first benefactress of Wilfrid, who, after the death of her husband King Oswy, found shelter for her widowhood at

Whitby, and there ended her days under the crosier of her daughter.

By a privilege which does honour to France, it was among us, in the country of Queen Bertha, the first Christian queen of the Anglo-Saxons, that the first English nuns were trained. France was thus the cradle of the Anglo-Saxon communities. In the time of the first missionaries, when monasteries were few, many of the new Christians of England learned the rules of monastic life among the Gallo-Franks, to whom they had been taught, more than a century before, by the glorious St. Martin, and after him by St. Maur, the cherished disciple of St. Benedict, and by St. Columbanus, the illustrious propagator of Celtic monachism. The Anglo-Saxons sent or took their daughters into Gaul, and the first beginning, in particular, of the great Christianity which was about to burst the bud in Great Britain, seems to have been specially prepared and formed in the communities on the banks of the Marne and the Seine, at Jouarre, Faremoutier, les Andelys, and later at Chelles.[1]

Jouarre, Faremoutier, and the neighbouring monasteries formed a sort of monastic province, dependent on Luxeuil, and occupied by the disciples of St. Columbanus.[2] The pious and courageous Burgundofara, *la noble baronne de Bourgogne*, blessed from her infancy by the holy patriarch of Luxeuil, ruled at Faremoutier the great foundation which has made her name illustrious for twelve centuries. She had with her an entire colony of young Anglo-Saxons. It had been the intention of Hilda, the great abbess of Whitby, from the time when she made up her mind to leave the world,[3] to lead a conventual life in one of the cloisters on

[1] "Multi de Britannia monachicæ conversationis gratia, Francorum vel Gallicorum monasteria adire solebant; sed et filias suas eisdem erudiendas ac sponso cœlesti copulandas mittebant."—BEDE, l. iii. c. 8.

[2] See vol. ii. pp. 321, 326.

[3] See vol. iii. p. 320. Bede says that it was at Chelles that Hereswida became a nun. Pagi, in his criticism on Baronius (ad ann. 680, c. 14 to

the banks of the Marne, where her sister, Hereswida, the queen of East Anglia, even before she became a widow, had sought an asylum, and where she ended her life in the practice of the monastic rule.[1]

However, it was not the Northumbrians alone—as might have been expected from the connection which linked to the great Catholic apostles of converted France a country itself converted to Christianity by Celtic missionaries—who thus sought the spiritual daughters of St. Columbanus. The young princesses and daughters of the great lords belonging to the kingdom of Kent, which was exclusively converted by Roman missionaries, showed as much or even greater eagerness. The great-granddaughter of the first Christian king of the Anglo-Saxons, Earcongotha, added a new lustre to the community of Faremoutier by the holiness of her life and death. She was, says Bede, a virgin of great virtue, worthy in everything of her illustrious origin.[2] East Anglia paid also its contribution to the powerful foundation of the noble Burgundofara. Two sisters of Etheldreda, whose strange story has been already recorded, governed in succession, notwithstanding their character of foreigners, the Gallo-Frankish abbey of Faremoutier, while their sister founded the greatest convent of

20), maintains, by arguments too long to be quoted, that Bede and Mabillon were both mistaken, one in supposing Hereswida to have been a nun at Chelles, and the other in thinking that Hilda joined her there. He proves that there was no trace of the two sisters either in the archives or calendars of Chelles before 1672, the epoch when the community obtained from Harlay, archbishop of Paris, by means of the famous casuist St. Beuve, authority to celebrate the feast of St. Hilda on the 27th of November, and to inscribe the name of St. Hereswida on the calendar of the sacristy at the date of December 9.

[1] "In eodem monasterio soror ipsius Hereswid, mater Aldulfi regis orientalium Anglorum, regularibus subdita disciplinis, ipso tempore coronam expectabat æternam."—BEDE, iv. 23. Pagi thinks she became a nun seven years before the death of her husband, but with his consent.

[2] "Ut condigna parenti soboles, magnarum fuit virgo virtutum, serviens Domino in monasterio quod . . . constructum est ab abbatissa nobilissima, vocabulo Fara."—BEDE, iii. 8.

nuns which had yet been seen in England.[1] Ten centuries later, another foreign princess, who had been received at Faremoutier, and whose memory has been made immortal by the genius of Bossuet, gave him an occasion to sound the praises of this famous house in a language which was perhaps more applicable to the community of the seventh century than to that of the seventeenth. "In the solitude of Sainte-Fare—as much separated from all worldly ways as its blessed position now separates it from all traffic with the world; in that holy mountain where the spouses of Jesus Christ revive the beauty of ancient days, where the joys of earth are unknown, where the traces of worldly men, of the curious and wandering, appear not—under the guidance of the holy abbess, who gave milk to babes as well as bread to the strong, the beginning of the Princess Anne was very happy."[2]

The illustrious abbess whom Queen Bathilde, herself an Anglo-Saxon by birth, placed in the celebrated monastery of Chelles when she re-established it, saw her community increased by a crowd of nuns whom the fame of her great qualities and tender kindness attracted from the other side of the Channel. Christians of both sexes felt the power of this attraction, for there were at Chelles as many Anglo-Saxon monks as nuns. Everything prospered so well, everything breathed a piety so active, fervent, and charitable, that the kings of the Heptarchy, moved by the perfume of virtue and good fame that rose from the double monastery peopled by their country-folks, emulated each other in praying the Abbess Bertile to send them colonies from her great bee-hive to occupy new foundations in England.[3]

[1] "Sæthryd, filia uxoris Annæ regis . . . et filia naturalis ejusdem regis Ædilberg, quæ utraque, cum esset peregrina, præ merito virtutum . . est abbatissa constituta."—BEDE, iii. 8. Cf. BOLLAND, vol. ii., July, p. 481.

[2] *Oraison Funèbre de la Princesse Palatine, Anne de Gonzague.*

[3] "Cujus conversatio sobria et benignissima advocavit plurimas fidelium animas feminarum immoque et virorum. Nec solummodo ex vicina

In this way probably came Botulph, whom we have already mentioned, and who was the one of Wilfrid's contemporaries most actively engaged in the extension of monastic institutions.[1] Before he was restored to his native soil, he had inspired with a lively and deep affection for himself two young Anglo-Saxon princesses who had been sent to France when scarcely more than infants to learn monastic life. They loved in him, we are told, not only a great master in holy and chaste living, but still more their countryman, a teacher of their own country and race. When they knew that he was about to return to England they were overwhelmed with sadness, their only consolation in which was to recommend him with all their might to their young brother, who was king, it is not known where, under the regency of his mother; after which there is no mention of them in history.[2] The touching image of these two young creatures appears in history only to bear witness to the faithfulness of their patriotism in the pious exile which was imposed upon them. It is a sentiment of which we shall find many traces among the Anglo-Saxon nuns.

But among the first nuns of the Heptarchy were there not, in the first place, virgins of Celtic origin, from Scotland or Ireland, like the monk-missionaries whose labours have been set forth? Nothing is more probable, though there is

provincia, sed etiam ex transmarinis partibus, sanctæ hujus feminæ felici fama percurrente, ad eam relictis parentibus et patria cum summo amoris desiderio . . . festinabant. . . . Etiam a transmarinis partibus Saxoniæ reges illi fideles ab ea permissos postulabant . . . qui virorum et sanctimonialum cœnobia in illa regione construerent."—*Vita S. Bertilæ*, c. 5, 6, ap. MABILLON, *Act. SS. O. S. B.*, see vol. iii. p. 20.

[1] See vol. iv. p. 188.

[2] "Erant in eodem monasterio . . . sorores duæ Edelmundi regis . . . diligebantque præcipuum patrem Botulfum sicut doctorem sanctitatis et castimoniæ, et plurimum ob studium gentis suæ. Adhuc siquidem tenellulæ missæ fuerant ultra mare ad discendam in monasteriali gymnasio disciplinam cœlestis sophiæ. Videntes beatum ad dilectum Doctorem velle repatriare, mœrentes mandata imponunt præferenda regi et fratri."—*Vita S. Botulfi*, ap. *Acta SS. O. S. B.*, sæc. iii. vol. iii. p. 3.

no positive proof of their existence. It would be impossible from this point of view to pass in silence a holy princess whose name is still popular in the north of England, and who has been long concluded by the annalists to be of Irish origin, while, at the same time, they recognise in her the instructress of the women and maidens of Northumbria in monastic life. To the west of this district, in the county which we now call Cumberland, upon a promontory bathed by the waves of the Irish Sea, and from which in clear weather the southern shore of Scotland and the distant peaks of the Isle of Man may be seen, a religious edifice still bears the name and preserves the recollection of St. Bega.[1] She was, according to the legend, the daughter of an Irish king, the most beautiful woman in the country, and already asked in marriage by the son ot the king of Norway. But she had vowed herself, from her tenderest infancy, to the Spouse of virgins, and had received from an angel, as a seal of her celestial betrothal, a bracelet marked with the sign of the cross.[2] On the night before her wedding day, while the guards of the king her father, instead of keeping watch as usual with sabres at their side and axes on their shoulders, were, like their guests, deep in the revel, she escaped alone, with nothing but the bracelet which the angel had given her, threw herself into a skiff, and landed on the opposite shore in Northumbria, where she

[1] In English, St. Bees. This is the name still borne by the promontory surmounted by a lighthouse, and situated a little south of Whitehaven. Below the southern slope of the promontory, and sheltered by its height from the sea-breezes, in the midst of a group of fine trees, stands the Priory, built by Raoul de Meschines in 1120, and restored in 1817, to be used as an English Church college. There remain still some precious relics of the buildings of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and even, according to some antiquaries, of the Saxon edifice destroyed by the Danes, which preceded the Norman foundation.

[2] "Accipe, inquit, eulogium istud a Domino tibi missum, quo te illi subaratam (*sic*) agnoscas. Pone ergo illud sicut signum super cor tuum et super brachium tuum, ut nullum admittas præter ipsum." Cf. Cantic. viii. 6.

lived long in a cell in the midst of the wood, uniting the care of the sick poor around with her prayers.[1] Fear of the pirates who infested these coasts led her after a while farther inland. What then became of her? Here the confusion, which is so general in the debatable ground between legend and history, becomes nearly inextricable. Was it she who, under the name of Heïu, is pointed out to us by Bede as the woman to whom Bishop Aïdan, the apostle of Northumbria, gave the veil, and whom he placed at the head of the first nunnery which had been seen in the north of England?[2] Or was it she who, under the name of Begu, after having abdicated the dignity of abbess, lived for thirty years a humble and simple nun in one of the monasteries under the rule of the great abbess of Whitby, Hilda, whose intimate friend she became, as well as her daughter in religion?[3] These are questions which have been long disputed by the learned, and which it seems impossible to bring to any satisfactory conclusion.[4] What is certain, however, is,

[1] "Erat speciosa forma præ cunctis filiabus regionis illius. . . . Virgo armillam super se fere indesinenter portavit. . . . Indulgebant calicibus epotandis potentes ad potandum et viri fortes ad miscendam ebrietatem. . . . Plures ex fortissimis Hyberniæ ambiebant totum palatium et uniuscujusque sica super femur suum et bipennis super humerum et lancea in manu ejus. . . . Pater ejus . . . inventam reduceret, et reductam plagis vapularet multis. . . . Omnia claustra ad tactum armillæ clavis David virgini egregiæ egredienti aperuit. . . . In loco tunc temporis satis nemoroso secus litus maris posito cellam virgineam sibi construxit."—*Vitæ S. Begæ et de Miraculis ejusdem*, ed. Tomlinson (Carlisle, 1842), pp. 46–53.

[2] See vol. iii. p. 319.

[3] BEDE, *Hist. Eccles.*, iv. 23.

[4] Most ancient authors believed this. The Bollandists themselves (vol. ii. Sept., p. 694) seem to admit it, though they seem to have had no knowledge of the *Life* of the saint, written by the monks of St. Bees, and which is founded entirely on this belief. The *Vita S. Begæ et de Miraculis ejusdem*, which was published for the first time in 1842, from a MS. in the British Museum, by Mr. Tomlinson, in the collection called *Carlisle Historical Tracts*, should not, however, in our opinion, counterbalance the contemporary testimony of Bede. The latter, always so careful to notice the Scottish origin of the personages of his narrative whenever there is occasion, remains silent as to that of the first Northumbrian nun; and

that a virgin of the name of Bega figures among the most well known and long venerated saints of the north-west of England. She was celebrated during her lifetime for her austerity, her fervour, and an anxiety for the poor which led her, during the building of her monastery, to prepare with her own hands the food of the masons and to wait upon them in their workshops, hastening from place to place like a bee laden with honey.[1] She remained down to the middle ages the patroness of the laborious and often oppressed population of the district, in which tradition presents her to us as arriving alone and fearless on a foreign shore, flying from her royal bridegroom. In the twelfth century the famous bracelet which the angel had given her was regarded with tender veneration: the pious confidence of the faithful turned it into a relic upon which usurpers, prevaricators, and oppressors against whom there existed no other defence were made to swear, with the certainty that a perjury committed on so dear and sacred a pledge would not pass unpunished. It was also to Bega and her bracelet that the cultivators of the soil had recourse against the new and unjust taxes with which their lords burdened them. In vain the Scottish reavers, or the *prepotents* of the country, treading down under their horses' feet the harvests of the Cumbrians, made light of the complaints and threats of the votaries of St. Bega. "What is the good old woman to me, and what harm can she do me?" said one. "Let

the two passages of the same chapter (iv. 23), where he speaks of Heïu, foundress of Hartlepool, and of Begu, contemporary with the death of Hilda, seem in no way to point to the same person. The Rev. Father Faber, in his *Life of St. Bega*, published while he was still an Anglican, in 1844, seems to hold that there were at least two saints whose acts are confounded together, and takes care to declare that his narrative does not pretend to historical accuracy. Wordsworth dedicated, in 1833, some of his finest verses to the still popular memory of the Irish saint, and of the places which bear her name.

[1] "In officinis monasterii construendis . . . manu sua cibos coquens parabat, artificibus apparebat, velut apis mellificans, currens et discurrens ministrabat."—*Vita S. Begh.*, p. 55.

your Bega come!" said another—"let her come and do whatever she likes! She cannot make one of our horses cast their shoes."[1] Sooner or later divine vengeance struck these culprits; and the fame of the chastisements sent upon them confirmed the faith of the people in the powerful intercession of her who, six hundred years after her death, still gave a protection so effectual and energetic against feudal rudeness, to the captive and to the oppressed, to the chastity of women, and the rights of the lowly, upon the western shore of Northumbria, as did St. Cuthbert throughout the rest of that privileged district.[2]

In proportion, however, as the details of the lives of holy nuns in England are investigated, the difficulty of tracing the line of demarcation between history and legend becomes more and more evident. But, after all, let us not lament too much over this confusion. True history—"that which

[1] "Protulerunt in medium S. Begæ virginis armillam, quia confidebant inultum non præterire perjurium super illam perpetratum. . . . Versabatur illo tempore controversia inter eos qui dominabantur terræ de Coupelandia, et homines subditos sibi, super quadam consuetudine qua boves solebant dominis pensari. . . . Impetebantur homines et cogebantur plus reddere quam arbitrabantur se solvere debere. . . .

"'Quid mihi facere poterit vetula illa?' et manum ad secretiores partes natium admovens: 'Hic, hic, inquit, sagittabit me.' . . . Quidam autem adolescentulus sagittam . . . jaciens . . . percussit illum in fonticulo fondamenti, quem ipse manu sua designaverat. . . . 'Veniat Bega, veniat, et quod potest faciat.'"—*De Miraculis*, pp. 68, 69, 62, 66. There is a curious passage in this work, p. 63, as to the terror with which, in the twelfth century, the Scottish marauders were inspired by those English arrows which were afterwards so fatal to the French nobles in the great battles of the fourteenth century.

[2] See above, p. 161. The narrative of St. Bega's miracles is clearly of the same period and conceived in the same spirit as the *Libellus de Admirandis Beati Cuthberti Virtutibus*. The most popular of these miracles, and that best remembered in the country, reminds us of the one commemorated at Rome on the festival of St. Mary of the Snow, the 15th of August. A fall of snow, in the midst of summer, marked exactly the disputed possessions of the monastery, the same which had been the original domain of the saint. Compare the text published by Tomlinson, p. 64, and the tradition preserved in the MSS. of the Chapter of Carlisle, ap. *Notes on St. Bega*, p. 15.

modifies souls, and forms opinions and manners"[1]—is not produced solely from dates and facts, but from the ideas and impressions which fill and sway the souls of contemporaries; translating into facts, anecdotes and scenes, the sentiments of admiration, gratitude, and love which inspire them for beings whom they believe to be of a superior nature to themselves, and whose benefits and example survive the ravages of time and human inconstancy.

We must, then, make up our minds to meet with this confusion through the entire series of our narratives, which are intended to give a picture of the faith and passions, the virtues and vices, of the new Christians of England, rather than to trace in methodical and chronological succession the course of uncertain or insignificant events. Let our readers be contented with our assurance that we will never permit ourselves to present to them, under the guise of truth, acts or words which are not of undisputed certainty.

To put some sort of order into the notes which we have gleaned on the subject of the Anglo-Saxon nuns, it will be well to arrange them according to the principal dynasties, or families and countries from which had issued all those noble women so devoted to God, St. Peter, and St. Benedict, who have gained a place on the altars of Catholic England.

I do not think I have anything to add to what has already been said in respect to the Northumbrian princesses, descendants of Ella and Ida, the *Man of Fire* and the *Ravager*. The holy and powerful abbesses, Hilda of Whitby, Ebba of Coldingham, Elfleda, the daughter of Oswy, who was dedicated to God from her birth as a ransom for the liberation of her country, her mother Eanfleda, who on becoming a widow entered the abbey of her daughter—these often-repeated names cannot have escaped the memory of our readers. Let us add only, according to a tradition, ancient and widely spread,[2] though disputed by modern

[1] LITTRE, *Journal des Savants*, November 1862.

[2] This tradition, accepted by Pagi (*ubi supra*) from William of Malmes-

learning, that the three sons of Oswy who reigned over Northumberland in succession, and who have been so often mentioned in the life of Wilfrid, were all three forsaken by their wives, who determined to consecrate themselves to God; though doubtless the two princesses married to the elder and younger of these princes neither occasioned the same struggle nor won the same fame as their sister-in-law St. Etheldreda, the wife of King Egfrid.

Let us then pass to the princesses of the most ancient Anglo-Saxon dynasty, the first converted to Christianity, that of the Ascings who reigned over the Jutes in the kingdom of Kent.

The first and most historical figure which we meet in the cloister among the descendants of Hengist is that of the gentle and devoted Ethelburga, whose life is linked so closely with the history of the beginning of Northumbrian Christianity.[1] She was the daughter of the first Christian king of South Anglia, and married the first Christian king of the North, Edwin, whose conversion was so difficult, whose reign was so prosperous, and his end so glorious. After the rapid ruin of that first Northumbrian Christianity which she, along with Bishop Paulinus, had begun, Queen Ethelburga, received with tender sympathy by her brother, the king of Kent, cared for no other crown but that of holy poverty. She obtained from her brother the gift of an ancient Roman villa, situated between Canterbury and the sea on the coast opposite France, and there founded a monastery, where she herself took the veil. She was thus the first widow of Saxon race who consecrated herself to monastic life. The old church of her monastery, called Lyminge, still exists. The burying-place of the foundress, who passed there the fourteen last years of her life—and

bury, Alford, and many others, is disputed by the Bollandists as regards the two princesses married to the two brothers, Alchfrid the friend, and Aldfrid the enemy, of Wilfrid.

[1] See vol. iii. pp. 259, 273.

who, daughter of the founder of Canterbury and widow of the founder of York, was thus the first link between the two great centres of Catholic life among the Anglo-Saxons—is still shown.[1]

We shall add nothing to what has been already said in respect to the daughter of Ethelburga, first queen of Northumberland, and then a nun like her mother,[2] nor of her granddaughter, the Abbess Elfleda, the amiable friend of St. Cuthbert, and generous protectress of St. Wilfrid.[3] But she had a sister, named Eadburga, who was a nun with her at Lyminge, and who, buried by her side in the monastery, was venerated along with her among the saints of England.[4] Her brother, who, like his father, married a Frankish princess,[5] the great-granddaughter of Clovis and St. Clothilde, peopled with his descendants the Anglo-Saxon and even foreign monasteries. Without speaking of his granddaughters, Earcongotha, who became, as has been formerly said, abbess of Faremoutier in France, and Ermenilda, queen of Mercia, whom we have already seen, and shall meet again further on among the abbesses of Ely,[6] this second Christian king of the most ancient kingdom of the Heptarchy had a daughter called Eanswida, who, educated by the Roman missionaries at Canterbury, received from them the veil of the brides of God. She distinguished herself by the foundation of a monastery, which, with true

[1] It is believed that remains of the Roman buildings have been discovered in certain portions of the present church of Lyminge. The tomb of St. Ethelburga was situated under a buttress at the south-east of the choir.—Rev. R. C. JENKINS, *Account of the Church of St. Mary and St. Eadburgh in Lyminge;* London and Folkestone, 1859. Cf. *Gentleman's Magazine*, August 1862.

[2] See vol. iii. pp. 312, 376, and genealogical tables A and B.

[3] See above, pp. 65, 150.

[4] BOLLAND., *Act. SS.*, Feb., vol. ii. p. 383, and vol. iii. p. 690.

[5] Emma, daughter of Clotaire II.—BOLL., vol. viii. Oct., p. 90.

[6] They were both daughters of King Ercombert and St. Sexburga, she who was abbess of Ely after her sister Etheldreda. See genealogical table D.

Roman spirit, she dedicated to St. Peter, and of which she was the superior, at Folkestone, on the heights of those white cliffs crowned by green pasturage, which attract the first glance of the numberless travellers whom the rapid prows of our day deposit at that spot upon the English shore.

Legends of all kinds have accumulated round the name of this young and holy descendant of Hengist and Clovis; the gaps in her authentic history are filled by incidents which show the idea formed by the Anglo-Saxons of the supernatural power with which a monastic vocation invested a daughter of the sovereign race. Her father, it was told, proposed to marry her, like her aunt, to a Northumbrian prince who was still a heathen. She obstinately refused. King Eadbald did not attempt to force her; but her suitor came with his train to urge his suit in person at a time when she was herself superintending the building of her future cloister. She sent him away without pity, defying him to lengthen, by the aid of his false gods, a rafter which was too short, which she herself succeeded in doing by praying with all her might to the true Saviour of the world. As soon as she was installed in her monastery she made it, after the fashion of all the religious foundations of the time, a great agricultural establishment as well as an ascetic sanctuary and a literary school. There, according to the popular tale, she tamed flocks of wild geese which spoiled her harvests, and which her servants stole from her poultry-yard and ate, to her great displeasure; with the tip of her crosier she dug a canal to bring to the monastery a stream of fresh water which was wanting. She died young, in 640: her abbey, which was built too near the sea on an overhanging rock, was swallowed up by the waves;[1] but the memory of this daughter of the

[1] "A Romanis monachis velatam esse, nullum dubium est, et monasticum institutum ab eisdem edoctam. . . . Oratorium suum rupibus suspensum, mari supereminens."—BOLL., vol. iv. August, pp. 685, 686.

conquering race, herself conquered by the love of God and her neighbour, long survived in the prayers of the faithful.[1] More than six hundred years after her death, a powerful Anglo-Norman baron renewed the Benedictine foundation of the Anglo-Saxon princess, dedicating the church to St. Peter and St. Eanswida.[2]

Another branch of the posterity of Hengist, issued from a young brother of Eanswida, who died before his father,[3] has also been taken possession of by legendary lore. This prince left two sons and four daughters; the latter were all nuns, and reckoned among the saints.[4] His two sons[5] were venerated as martyrs, according to the general idea of the time, which regarded as martyrdom every kind of violent death endured by the innocent. They were assassinated by a thane named Thunnor, who thus attempted to do a pleasure to King Egbert, the fourth successor of St. Ethelbert, by freeing him of young cousins, who might become dangerous competitors.[6] The legend here rises to the rank of true poetry, and at the same time embodies true morality, as is almost always the case. In a vain attempt to hide, it says, the bones of his victims, the assassin buried them in the palace of the king, and even under the throne on which he sat on festive occasions;[7] but a supernatural light came to denounce the crime, shining upon the unknown

[1] The Bollandists have published a fragment of her office.

[2] This baron's name was John de Segrave, and his wife's Juliana de Sandwich.—STEVENS, i. 399, ex. WEEVER, p. 270.

[3] He was called Ermenifred, and his death left the throne of Kent to his brother Ercombert, the third Christian king, father of King Egfrid, and of the saints Ermenilda and Earcongotha. See genealogical table B.

[4] Ermenberga or Domneva, Ermenburga, Etheldreda, and Ermengytha.

[5] Ethelbert and Ethelred.

[6] Bede says nothing of all this; but it has been related with more or less of detail by all the more recent authorities, William of Malmesbury, Simeon of Durham, Matthew of Westminster, and above all Thorne, in his Chronicle of the Abbey of St. Augustin at Canterbury. Cf. LAPPENBERG, i. 239, and THOMAS OF ELMHAM, who gives a very detailed version, pp. 209 to 239 of the new edition issued by Hardwicke.

[7] "In aula regia, sub regia cathedra."—MATTH. WESTMONAST., p. 14.

tomb, and revealing it to the devotion of the faithful. The king, amazed and abashed, had to expiate the crime which was committed, if not by his orders, at least to his advantage. Supported by the popular clamour, the two illustrious foreign monks, who were then the chief-justices and peacemakers of the country, Theodore, the archbishop of Canterbury, and the African Adrian, abbot of St. Augustin,[1] intimated to him that he must pay the *price of blood*—that is to say, the compensation ordained by all Teutonic laws—to a sister of the victims, and that all the more that this sister, called Domneva, was married to a Mercian prince, son of the savage and unconquerable Penda.[2] This ransom of blood was to take the form of a territorial gift for the foundation of a monastery in which virgins consecrated to God should for ever supplicate divine pardon. Domneva asked for as much land as a tame doe which belonged to her could run round in one course. The spot was the island of Thanet, at the mouth of the Thames, where their ancestor, Hengist, and, two centuries later, St. Augustin, had landed; and which was doubly dear to the nation as the place at which the Saxon occupation began and Christianity first appeared among them. It was, besides, a very fertile spot, the flower and jewel of the country, a sort of terrestrial paradise.[3] King Egbert consented to this arrangement, and the parties met on the ground. The doe was let loose, and the king and his court followed it with their eyes, when the villain Thunnor arrived, crying out that Domneva was a witch, who had bewitched the king to make him give up his fair lands

[1] See their part in the history of Wilfrid, vol. iii. p. 422.

[2] See genealogical tables B and C.

[3] "Post sororem eorum Dompnenam misit, ut ipsa interfectionis pretium reciperet. . . . Venit rex tristis, veniam petiit. . . . Respondit Dompnena: Quantum cerva mea domestica uno impetu percurrere poterit. . . . Emissa cerva currit velociter, aspiciente rege cum suis hilari vultu cursum cervæ. . . . Insula arridens bona rerum copia, regni flos et thalamus . . . in qua tanquam quodam Elysio. . . . Clamavit Dompnenam incantatricem, et insipientem regem qui terram fertilem et nobilem bruti animalis indicio tradidit."

to the instinct of a brute. Then, being on horseback, he pursued the doe to stop her; but in his wild career he came to a well, in which he was drowned, and which has ever since been called *Thunnor's leap*.[1] The doe's course included forty-two plough-lands: she crossed the island in two different directions before returning to her mistress. The land thus marked out was given over to Domneva and her spiritual posterity. Archbishop Theodore immediately consecrated the new foundation, which took the name of *Minster*, as who should say *The* Monastery.[2]

Domneva became a widow, and taking then the name of Ermenberga,[3] was the first abbess of the new community, which was soon occupied by seventy nuns. But she soon gave up the government to her daughter Mildred, whom she had sent into France, to Chelles, to receive a literary and a religious education. The abbess of Chelles, far from encouraging the young princess to embrace monastic life, employed every kind of threat and ill-usage to compel her to marry one of her relatives: thus at least says the legend, which is too singular, and too different in this point from all similar narratives, not to have a certain authenticity. But Mildred resisted the temptation victoriously. She returned to England to govern the abbey founded by her mother, and to give an example of all the monastic virtues to her seventy companions. Very few details of her life have been preserved:

[1] The situation of the well and the whole direction of the doe's course may be found in the old and curious map of the Isle of Thanet, which has been republished in miniature in Dugdale's *Monasticon* (i. 84), and by the Bollandists (vol. iv. of July, p. 513), but the exact facsimile of which is found in the new edition of Elmham.

[2] This monastery, like all the English ones, was destroyed by the Danes and rebuilt under the Normans. There still remains a large and beautiful church, newly restored. It is supposed that some remains of Domneva's original building can be traced in a portion of the tower of this church, built of large stones and Roman tiles.—*Gentleman's Magazine*, July 1862.

[3] According to another version she was called Ermenberga before she became abbess, and only then assumed the name of *Domna Ebba*, or Domneva.—BOLLAND., vol. viii. Oct., p. 91.

which makes the extraordinary and prolonged popularity which has attached to her name, her relics, and everything belonging to her all the more wonderful. Her popularity eclipsed that of St. Augustin, even in the district which he first won to the faith, and to such a point that the rock which had received the mark of his first footstep,[1] and which lies a little to the east of Minster, took and retained up to the eighteenth century the name of St. Mildred's Rock.

An entire chapter would be necessary to narrate the violent struggles, the visions, and other incidents which are connected with the history of her relics, and what hagiographers call her posthumous fame. Her name, like that of many other Anglo-Saxon nuns, has once more become fashionable in our days, but it recalls to our ungrateful contemporaries nothing but the vague poetry of the past. It was mixed up with the real history of the Danes and Normans, of Canute the Great, of Edward the Confessor, of Lanfranc, of Edward I., the terrible victor of the Scots and Welsh.[2] The worship of Mildred appears interspersed in the midst of all these personages with every kind of edifying and amusing anecdote, such as touch the most delicate and the most diverse chords of the human heart. By the side of the touching scene in which the persecuted wife of Edward the Confessor, forsaken by all, is consoled by the apparition of Mildred—and the story of the solemn translation of her relics by Archbishop Lanfranc—are found grotesque incidents, such as that of the bellringer who, while asleep before her shrine, was woke by a box on the ear, administered by the holy princess, who said to him, "This is the oratory and not the dormitory."[3] In that

[1] See vol. iii. p. 188. Cf. STANLEY, *Historical Memorials of Canterbury*.

[2] BOLLAND, *loc. cit.* Cf. OAKLEY, *Life of St. Augustin*, p. 134.

[3] "Inæstimabili decore fulgida . . . elata palma, alapam ei dedit, docens oratorium, non dormitorium, ibi esse."—BOLLAND., vol. iv. July, p. 518.

wonderful efflorescence of imagination quickened by faith, which for several centuries was interwoven with all Christian society, the legend had something for all—for crowned heads and common people, and could at the same time move its audience to laugh or to weep. Let us return to history by adding that William the Conqueror, when he became master of England, formally respected the right of asylum claimed by criminals at the place where the relics of Mildred lay; for, while destroying the Anglo-Saxon crown, he took great care to aim no blow at the persevering devotion shown by his new subjects for the saints of both sexes who had proceeded from their national dynasties.

Mildred had two sisters, whose names are connected with hers by that eccentric taste for alliteration which characterises the Anglo-Saxons. Their names were Milburga and Milgytha; they were both nuns like their sister, their mother, their three aunts, their grandaunt Eanswida, and their great-grandaunts Ethelburga and Eadburga.[1] We are now at the fourth generation of the descendants of the first Christian king, and we may well say with Mabillon: "*Puellarum regiarum, quibus idem animus fuit, numerus iniri vix potest.*"[2] The three daughters of the foundress of Minster were compared to Faith, Hope, and Charity.[3] Nothing is known of Milgytha except that she was a nun at Canterbury.[4] As for Milburga, she was consecrated by the Archbishop Theodore abbess of a monastery founded beyond the Severn, upon the borders of Anglo-Saxon territory and the land still held by the Celts of Cambria. Like Mildred, she has furnished more than one expressive incident to monastic legends. The young abbess was exposed, like so many of her fellows, to the pursuit of

[1] See genealogical table B.

[2] *Act. SS. O. S. B.*, sæc. iii. 1, p. 40.

[3] "Nomina simillima, par formarum gloria . . . mens et amor et sanctitas trium erat unica. Hinc Milburga, ut fides, inde Milgytha, ut spes, media coruscat Mildretha, ut caritas."—BOLLAND., *loc. cit.*, p. 516.

[4] BOLLAND., vol. ii. January, p. 176

a neighbouring prince, who, being determined to marry her, attempted to seize her person by force. As she fled before the sacrilegious band, a river which she had just crossed rose all at once into flood, so as to place an insurmountable barrier in the way of the too eager suitor, who thereupon gave up the pursuit. Another miracle, attributed to her, recalls the most touching of those which are mentioned in the life of Wilfrid. A poor widow came to her one day when she was alone in her oratory, and, throwing herself on her knees, besought her with tears to raise up her dead child, whose poor little body she had brought with her. Milburga asked if she were mad. "Go," she said, "bury your son, and prepare to die, in your turn, like him; for we are all born but to die." "No, no," said the widow, "I will not leave you till you have restored to me my son alive." The abbess then prayed by the little corpse, and all at once she appeared to the poor mother surrounded by a flame which descended from heaven, the living emblem of the fervour of her prayer. An instant after, life came back to the child. When Milburga had reached the end of her own days, which were fragrant with charity and purity, she gathered all her community around her death-bed. "Beloved sisters," she said, "I have always loved you as my own soul, and I have watched over you like a mother. I have now come to the end of my pilgrimage; I leave you to God and to the blessed Virgin Mary." With which words she died. Four hundred years after her death her monastery, which had been destroyed by the Danes, was re-established by a colony of monks from Cluny. While they were building the church a heavenly fragrance betrayed the place of Milburga's burial. Her relics were exposed to public veneration, and an innumerable crowd hastened to visit them—old and young, rich and poor, rivalling each other in the pilgrimage. All the surrounding country was covered by a tide of pilgrims: so great, notwithstanding the double invasion of Danes and Normans and the passage of centuries,

was the fidelity of the English people to the memory of the first saints of their race.[1]

In order not to separate the three sisters from their mother, we have introduced them after the holy nuns of the dynasty of Hengist and Ethelbert, from whom they were descended by the mother's side. But by their father, who belonged to the reigning family of Mercia, they were the granddaughters of Penda, the most terrible enemy of the Christian name.[2]

In fact, a transformation far more sudden and not less complete than that which turned the granddaughters of the *Ravager* and *Man of Fire* into abbesses and saints was wrought upon the posterity of the ferocious Penda of Mercia, the warlike octogenarian, who had been the last and most formidable hero of Anglo-Saxon paganism.[3] Of all the races descended from Odin who shared among them the sway of England, no one has furnished a larger list of nuns and saints to be inscribed in the national calendar than the descendants of Penda, as if they thus meant to pay a generous ransom for the calamities inflicted upon the new Christians of England by their most cruel enemy.[4] We will not return again to speak of his firstborn son, whose love for the daughter of Oswy made him the first-born son of the Church in Mercia, the first Christian baptized in that country;[5] nor of his first successor, Wulphere, the generous founder of Peterborough; nor of his other successor, Ethelred, the devoted friend of Wilfrid, who ended his thirty years' reign by ten years of life

[1] "Non a te recedam, nisi prolem meam restituas vivam. . . . Vos hactenus, dilectissimæ sorores, sicut animæ meæ viscera dilexi."—CAPGRAVE, ap. BOLLAND., vol. iii. February, p. 390. "Vix patuli campi capiebant agmina viatorum . . . cunctos in commune præcipitante fide."—GUILL. MALMESB., *De Gest. Reg.*, lib. ii. c. 13.

[2] See genealogical table C.

[3] See vol. iii.

[4] "Ita parens perpetuo in Deum rebellis sanctissimos cœlo fructus effudit."—THOMAS DE ELMHAM, p. 189.

[5] See vol. iii. p. 361.

in a monastery. We treat only at this moment of the daughters and granddaughters of the sanguinary victor who had cut off so many Christian kings among the neighbouring nations.

An obstinate tradition found in the ancient English chronicles asserts that two of his daughters, Kyneburga and Kyneswitha, both gave up the thought of marriage to consecrate themselves to God. The eldest, who was married to the intimate friend of her brother Peada, the eldest son of King Oswy of Northumbria, the friend and first protector of Wilfrid,[1] is said to have left him, with his consent, to end her life in the cloister. The youngest, sought in marriage by Offa, king of the East Saxons, used her connection with him only to persuade the young prince to embrace monastic life, as she herself wished to do.[2] A more profound study, however, of the period has made the authenticity of this legend doubtful.[3] But it has proved that the two daughters of the bloody Penda contributed, with their brothers, to the establishment of the great abbey of Medehampstede or Peterborough; that their names appear in the lists of the national assembly which sanctioned this foundation, and that they spent their retired and virginal lives in some retreat near the new sanctuary. After their death they were buried at Peterborough; their relics, happily found after the burning of the monastery and the massacre of all the monks by the Danes, were carried back there on its restoration, and continued to be venerated there down to the twelfth century.

A third daughter of the terrible Penda, Eadburga, was

[1] See vol. iii. p. 360.

[2] GUILL. MALMESB., RICARD. CIRENCESTER, ALFORD, HARPSFELD, CAPGRAVE, &c. Pagi accepts this tradition: *Crit. in Baronium*, ad ann. 680.

[3] *Act. SS. Bolland.*, vol. i. March, p. 441. It is not known by what authority the author of the continuation of Dugdale makes Kyneburga the first abbess of the great monastery at Gloucester, the church of which, now a cathedral, is one of the most curious buildings in England.—STEVENS, i. 266.

also a nun, and became abbess at Dormuncester, according to the English martyrology. Her son Merwald, who did not reign, like his brothers, and never attained a higher rank than that of *sub-regulus* or ealdorman, married her who was afterwards abbess of Minster, a union from which sprung the three holy sisters Milburga, Mildred, and Milgytha, whom we have just spoken of. Another son, Wulphere, who succeeded Penda on the throne of Mercia, had a saint for his wife, and of this marriage proceeded another holy saint, Wereburga, who was the fourth of the granddaughters of Penda whom grateful England placed upon her altars.

The wife of Wulphere, the son and successor of Penda, was Ermenilda, daughter of the king of Kent, and granddaughter, by her mother, of Anna, the king of East Anglia, who perished upon the battlefield defending his country and religion against the attacks of Penda.[1] This religion, henceforward triumphant, reconciled and united the posterity of the murderer and that of the victim. We thus come, through the essentially Christian and monastic dynasty of the Ascings of Kent, to that of the Uffings of East Anglia, which was equally remarkable for the crowd of saints which it produced. King Anna, who married the sister of Hilda, the celebrated abbess of Whitby, had a natural daughter, who was a nun in France, along with the daughter, by a former marriage, of her father's wife; both, as has been already said, were abbesses of Faremoutier,[2] and both are reckoned among the saints.

By his union with the sister of Hilda, King Anna had three daughters and a son. The son became in his turn the father of three daughters, two of whom were in succession abbesses of the monastery of Hackness, in Northumbria, founded by their grandaunt St. Hilda, and the last, Eadburga, was that abbess of Repton whom we have already

[1] See vol. iii. p. 348.

[2] See above, p. 380, and the genealogical table D.

encountered as the friend of the illustrious and generous hermit, Guthlac.[1]

The three daughters of Anna—Etheldreda, Sexburga, and Withburga—are all counted among the saints. Let us speak, in the first place, of the latter, though she was the youngest of the three. She was sent to the country to be nursed, and remained there until she heard, while still quite young, the news of her father's death on the battle-field. She resolved immediately to seek a refuge for the rest of her life in cloistral virginity. She chose for her asylum a modest remnant of her father's lands at Dereham in Norfolk, and there built a little monastery. But she was so poor that she, her companions, and the masons who built her future dwelling had to live on dry bread alone. One day, after she had prayed long to the blessed Virgin, she saw two does come out of the neighbouring forest to drink at a stream whose pure current watered the secluded spot. Their udders were heavy with milk, and they permitted themselves to be milked by the virginal hands of Withburga's companions, returning every day to the same place, and thus furnishing a sufficient supply for the nourishment of the little community and its workmen.[2] This lasted until the ranger of the royal domain, a savage and wicked man, who regarded with an evil eye the rising house of God, undertook to hunt down the two helpful animals. He pursued them with his dogs across the country, but, in

[1] See above, p. 288.

[2] "Juxta mare cum sua nutrice in quodam vico paterni juris. Ad sanctimonialem confugit professionem, ubi in umbra alarum Dei sperans suaviter requievit. . . . In humilem locum paterni juris devenit. . . . Mittit ad fontem quo silva grato irrigatur fluvio. . . . Duæ assiliunt cervæ. . . . Has mulgebant manus virgineæ. . . . Præpositus ipsius villæ . . . adductis canibus nitebatur insontes feras captare."—BOLLAND., vol. ii. March, p. 606.

There still exists at East Dereham, a small parish in Norfolk, a well bearing the name of St. Withburga. It is fed by a spring rising in the very place where the saint's body was laid before its translation to Ely.—*Notes and Queries*, third series, vol. iii. p. 247.

attempting to leap a high hedge, with that bold impetuosity which still characterises English horsemen, his horse was impaled on a post, and the hunter broke his neck.[1]

Withburga ended her life in this poor and humble solitude; but the fragrance of her gentle virtues spread far and wide. The fame of her holiness went through all the surrounding country. The worship given to her by the people of Norfolk was maintained with the pertinacity common to the Anglo-Saxon race, and went so far that, two centuries after her death, they armed themselves to defend her relics from the monks of Ely, who came, by the king's command, to unite them to those of her sisters at Ely.

To Ely, also, the monastic metropolis of East Anglia, and queen of English abbeys, we must transport ourselves to contemplate three generations of princesses issued from the blood of the Uffings and Ascings, and crowned by the nimbus of saints. There were, in the first place, the two queens of Mercia and Kent, Etheldreda, whom our readers already know,[2] and her elder sister, Sexburga. This accomplished princess had married one of the kings of Kent, the one who, after Ethelbert, had showed himself most zealous for the extension of the Gospel. It was she especially who moved him to destroy the last idols which still remained in his kingdom. After twenty-four years of conjugal life, she became a widow, and was regent for four years of the kingdom of her son. As soon as he was old enough to reign, she abdicated, not only the crown, but secular life, took the veil from the hands of Archbishop Theodore, and founded a monastery in the Isle of Sheppy, situated at the mouth of the Thames, and separated from the mainland by that arm of the sea in which Augustin, on Christmas Day 579, baptized at once ten thousand Saxons. This monastery took and kept the name of

[1] The monastic chronicler describes the accident with all the spirit of a steeplechaser: "Equus in obstantem sepem urgentibus calcaribus incurrit, secusque acuta sude transfixus ilia, dum resiliendo tergiversaretur, sessor superbus supino capite excutitur, fractaque cervice exanimatur."

[2] See above, in the life of Wilfrid, p. 16.

Minster, like that which was founded at the same time by her niece Domneva in the neighbouring Isle of Thanet. The church is still visible not far from the great roads of Sheerness, which has become one of the principal stations of the British navy. She there ruled a community of seventy-seven nuns, until she learned that her sister Etheldreda, having fled from the king her husband, according to the advice of Wilfrid, had taken refuge in the marshes of their native country, and had there formed a new asylum for souls resolute to serve God in solitude and virginity. Sexburga then resolved to return to her own country and become a simple nun under the crosier of her sister. "Farewell, my daughters," she said to her companions who were gathered round her, "I leave you Jesus for your protector, His holy angels for companions, and one of my daughters for your superior. . . . I go to East Anglia, where I was born, in order to have my glorious sister Etheldreda for my mistress, and to take part immediately in her labours here below, that I may share her recompense above."

She was received with enthusiasm at Ely: the entire community came out to welcome her: and the two sister-queens wept with joy when they met. They lived together afterwards in the most sweet and tender union, rivalling each other in zeal for the service of God and the salvation of souls, Sexburga compelling herself always to take lessons of humility and fervour from her sister. When Etheldreda died, Sexburga replaced her as abbess, and ruled the great East Anglian monastery for twenty years before she too found her rest near the tomb which she had erected to her sister.[1]

[1] "Vobis, O filiæ, Jesum derelinquo tutorem, sanctosque angelos paranymphos. . . . Ego gloriosæ sororis meæ magisterio informanda. . . . Regina reginam excepit, soror sororem cum tripudio introducit, fundunt ubertim præ gaudio lacrymas, et ex vera caritate inter eas lætitia germinatur. Cœlesti namque dulcedine delectatæ alterna invicem consolatione proficiunt. Venit dives illa de prælatione ad subjectionem. . . Federatæ invicem beatæ sorores in unitate fidei."—*Historia Eliensis*, l. i. c. 18, 35.

Besides her two sons, who reigned over Kent in succession, Sexburga had two daughters, one of whom, Earcongotha, lived and died, as has been already seen, in a French monastery; the other, Ermenilda, married to the son and successor of Penda, became, along with the illustrious exile Wilfrid, the principal instrument of the final conversion of Mercia, the greatest kingdom of the Heptarchy. Like her mother, she used all the influence which the love of her husband gave her to extirpate the last vestiges of idolatry in the country which had been the centre and last bulwark of Anglo-Saxon heathenism.[1] The example of her virtues was the most effectual of sermons; and it was, above all, by her incomparable sweetness, her pity for all misfortune, her unwearied kindness, that she touched the hearts of her subjects most.[2] Like her mother, too, it was her desire to offer herself entirely to God, to whom she had finally led back her people: as soon as she became a widow she took the veil, like her mother, and under her mother—for it was to Ely that she went to live in humility and chastity, under a doubly maternal rule. The mother and daughter contended which should give the finest examples of humility and charity.[3] At last, and still following in her mother's steps, Ermenilda, on the death of Sexburga, became abbess, and was thus the third princess of the blood of the Uffings who ruled the flourishing community of Ely. The local chronicle affirms that it was not her birth but her virtues, and even her love

[1] "Nec quievit invicta, donec idola et ritus dæmoniacos extirparet. . . . Rex . . . sanctis uxoris desideriis, petitionibus ac monitis ultro se inclinans."—JOANN. BROMPTON, ap. BOLLAND., vol. ii. February, p. 687. See vol. iii. p. 418.

[2] "Ad omnem pietatem, compassionem et omnium necessitudinum subventionem materna viscera ante omnia induebat. Eadem in omnibus benignitas, in Christo caritas erat."—*Ibid.*, p. 691.

[3] "Contendebant alterutra pietate mater et filia, quæ humilior, quæ possit esse subjectior: mater sibi præferebat ejus, quam genuerat, virginitatem; virgo matris auctoritatem: utrinque et vincere et vinci gaudebant."—GOTSELINUS, *Vita S. Wereburgæ*, ap. BOLLAND., vol. i. February, p. 388.

of holy poverty, which made her preferred to all others by the unanimous suffrages of her numerous companions.[1] She showed herself worthy of their choice: she was less a superior than a mother. After a life full of holiness and justice, her soul went to receive its eternal reward in heaven, and her body was buried beside those of her mother and aunt in the church of the great abbey, which had thus the singular privilege of having for its three first abbesses a queen of Northumbria, a queen of Kent, and a queen of Mercia.

But this celebrated community was to be in addition the spiritual home of a fourth abbess and saint, in whom the blood of Penda and of Anna,[2] the victor and the vanquished, was blended. This was Wereburga, the only daughter of Ermenilda, who had not followed but preceded her mother in the cloister.

These crowned Christians had learned in their palaces to despise wealth, luxury, and worldly pomp. They considered themselves prisoners of vanity.[3] Notwithstanding her beauty, which, like that of Etheldreda, is boasted by the annalists, Wereburga repulsed all her suitors. A monastery seemed to her the most noble of palaces. Following this impulse, she went to her grandaunt Etheldreda at Ely, with the consent of her father, who himself took her there in state, accompanied by his royal suite. When her grandmother, Queen Sexburga, and her mother, Queen Ermenilda, followed her, three generations of princesses of the blood

[1] "Voto unanimi et consensu totius congregationis . . . successit; quæ totius dominationis ambitione neglecta . . . ad Christi paupertatem, quam optaverat, pauper ipsa devenit. . . . A cunctis digne suscepta, totius mater congregationis effecta est. Transivit autem plena sanctitate et justitia ad regna cœlestia."

[2] See genealogical tables B, C, and D.

[3] "Viluerant divitiæ tam matri quam filiæ: palatium habebant pro monasterio: aurum, gemmæ, vestes auro textæ, et quicquid fert pompatica mundi jactantia onerosa sibi magis erant quam gloriosa: et si forte his uti ad tempus regia compelleret dignitas, dolebant se potius vanitatis subjectas tanquam captivas."—*Act. SS. Bolland.*, vol. i. February, p. 387.

of Hengist and Odin were thus seen together, the grandmother, mother, and daughter, wearing the same monastic dress, and bound by the same rule for the service of God and man. Wereburga lived long as a humble and simple nun, fulfilling in her turn all the offices in the monastery, until the time when, after the death of her mother, she was called to take the place of abbess.

Her uncle Ethelred, who, after a reign of thirty years, was to end his days in the cloister, was so struck with the prudence and capacity that were apparent, combined with holiness, in the character of Wereburga, that he entrusted her with a sort of supremacy, or rather a general right of inspection over the various nunneries in his kingdom.[1] It was in exercise of this office that, before entering on the government of Ely, she had been at the head of the communities of Weedon, Trentham, and Hanbury in turn, leaving everywhere a fragrance of virtue and kindness, and recollections of her constant solicitude for the benefit of all, which made her memory dear to the people, and of which, as usual, legendary lore has taken possession. Of all the incidents that adorn her biography we will quote one only, which explains better than any other the popularity of her memory. It happened one day that a shepherd on the monastic lands of Weedon, a man distinguished by his holy life, was treated by the steward with that savage brutality which the modern English too often borrow from their Anglo-Saxon ancestors. At this sight the niece of the sovereign of Mercia, the granddaughter of the terrible Penda, threw herself at the feet of the cruel steward. "For the love of God," she said, "spare this innocent man; he is more pleasing in the eyes of God, who from the heights

[1] "Cum formæ pulchritudo insigniter responderet generositati suæ, cœpit speciosa facie cum speciosissima mente ad eum . . . contendere. . . . Procos et amatores regificos angelica pudicitia repulit. . . . Virginalis B. Wereburgæ pudicitia, mox ut valuit, hæc vincula exuit. . . . Tradidit ei monasteriorum sanctimonalium quæ in suo regno pollebant principatum."—BOLLAND., vol. i., February, pp. 387, 388.

of heaven regards all our actions, than either you or I." The wretch paid no attention to her, and she began to pray, continuing until the steward, paralysed and distorted by miraculous strength, had in his turn to appeal to the intervention of the saint that he might be restored to his natural condition."[1]

At the death of Wereburga the population in the neighbourhood of the monastery where she died, and where she was to be buried, fought for the possession of her body, an event which began to be customary at the death of our holy nuns. Two centuries later, in order to save her dear remains from the Danes, the *ealdorman* of Mercia had them carried to Chester, a city already celebrated in the times of the Britons and Romans, and where a great abbey, with a church which is now admired among the fine cathedrals of England, rose over her tomb.

To complete this list of Anglo-Saxon princesses, whose cloistral education and vocation have been revealed to us by the worship of which they were the object, it now remains to say a few words of the nuns who proceeded from the race which a century later was to absorb all the kingdoms of the Heptarchy, and form the political unity of England. This race of Cerdic, the founder of the kingdom of Wessex, has already given us an essentially monastic figure in the person of the legislator King Ina,[2] who, in the midst of a prosperous and glorious reign, gave up his crown and went to Rome to become a monk. It was his wife Ethelburga, as may be remembered, who, by a scene cleverly arranged, prepared him to leave his kingdom, his country, and the world. She alone never left him; she accompanied him in

[1] "Amentarius, vir piæ conversationis et quantum licuit sub humana servitute sanctæ vitæ. . . . Nunc villicus dominæ cum forte laniaret cruentissimo verbere . . . proruit ad pedes indignos lanistæ. . . . Parce, pro Dei amore, quare excarnificas hominem innocentem. . . . Continuo dura cervix et torva facies in terga illi reflectitur."—*Ibid.*, p. 389.

[2] See above, p. 292, and the genealogical table E.

his voluntary exile, and at his death returned to become a nun at Barking, in England.

Beside the wife of Ina, and, like her, of the blood of Cerdic,[1] the two sisters of the king, Coenburga[2] and Cuthburga, take their place in monastic annals, both devoted to religious life, and reckoned among the English saints. The latter is much the most celebrated of the two. She was married young to the learned and peaceful Aldfrid, king of Northumbria, whose important influence on the life of Wilfrid has been already seen, and was, like her sister-in-law Etheldreda, struck upon the throne by the thunderbolt of divine love, and in the lifetime of her husband desired to give up conjugal life and her royal state to consecrate herself to the service of God in the cloister. Less tender or less violent than his brother Egfrid, King Aldfrid consented to the separation,[3] and Cuthburga took the veil in the monastery of Barking, on the Thames, in the kingdom of East Anglia. This house, which had been founded some time before by a holy bishop of London for his sister, in whom he had recognised a soul destined to govern those who gave themselves to God,[4] was already celebrated, not only for the fervour of its nuns, but by the zeal they dis-

[1] "Regii generis femina de Cerdici prosapia regis oriunda."—GUILL. MALMESB.

[2] Placed by the Bollandists (vol. iv. Sept., die 12) among the *prætermissi*, because her adoration does not appear to them certain, though she is named in a crowd of martyrologies. Cf. PAGI, *Crit. in Annal.* BARONII, ad. ann. 705.

[3] "Ante finem vitæ suæ connubio carnalis copulæ ambo pro Dei amore renunciavere."—FLORENT. WIGORNENSIS. Cf. BOLLAND., vol. vi. August, p. 696.

[4] "In quo ipsa Deo devotarum mater ac nutrix posset existere feminarum, quæ suscepto monasterii regimine, condignam se in omnibus episcopo fratre, et ipsa recte vivendo et subjectis regulariter et pie consulendo præbuit."—BEDE, iv. 6. This bishop was called Earconwald, and his sister Edilberga or Ethelburga. She must not be confounded with the widow of King Ina, who afterwards was a nun, and even abbess at Barking. The bishop himself became a monk at Chertsey, another monastery also founded by him on the banks of the Thames.

played for the study of the Holy Scriptures, the Fathers of the Church, and even the classic tongues. The sister of Ina remained there only a few years. Her brother desired her to become the superior of a great foundation belonging to their race and country. He established her at Winbourne, in a very fertile country,[1] near the royal residence of the kings of Wessex, and not far from the sea which washes the shores of the district now called Dorsetshire. The queen of Northumbria, when she became abbess of the new community, carried with her the spirit and habits of her first monastic dwelling-place, and Winbourne soon became still more celebrated than Barking for the great development of its literary studies.

But before we discuss briefly the singular birth of ecclesiastical and classical literature among the Anglo-Saxon nuns, and before we leave the country of Wessex, which gave to the English their first monarch, Egbert, and to the Teutonic world its most illustrious apostle, Boniface, a place must be reserved for the touching and popular story of Frideswida, foundress and patron of Oxford—that is to say, of one of the most celebrated literary and intellectual centres of the universe. She was the daughter of one of the great chiefs of the country, to whom the legend gives the title of king, or at least of *subregulus*, and was, like all the heroines of Anglo-Saxon legend, sought in marriage by another king or chief called Algar, more powerful than her father, whose alliance she obstinately refused in order to consecrate herself to religious life. The prince, carried away by his passion, resolved to seize on her by force. To escape from his pursuit she threw herself, like Bega, into a boat, not to cross the sea, like the Irish princess, but to put the Thames between herself and her lover. After proceed-

[1] "Quod Latine interpretatur *vini fons* dici potest, quia propter nimiam claritatem et saporem eximium quo cæteris terræ illius aquis præstare videbatur, hoc nomen accepit."—RODOLPHI, *Vita S. Liobæ*, ap. *Acta SS. O. S. B.*, sæc. iii. p. 2.

ing for ten miles on the river, she landed on the borders of a forest, where she hid herself in a sort of hut covered with ivy, but intended in the first place for the swine which, then as later, went to eat the acorns in the woods, and were one of the principal riches of the Anglo-Saxon proprietors.[1] It was not a secure refuge for her. Algar, growing more and more in earnest, tracked her everywhere, with the intention of sacrificing her to the brutality of his companions as well as to his own. But at the moment when, exhausted with weariness, she was about to fall into his hands, she bethought herself of the great saints who, from the earliest days of the Church, had defended and saved their virginity at the price of their life. She invoked Catherine, the most illustrious martyr of the Eastern Church, and Cecilia, the sweet and heroic Roman whose name, inserted in the canon of the mass, was already familiar to all the new Christians. Her prayer was granted. God struck the savage Anglo-Saxon with sudden blindness, which put an end to his furious pursuit.

From this incident sprang a wild but obstinate tradition, according to which the kings of England for several centuries carefully avoided living or even passing by Oxford, for fear of losing their eyesight.[2] Frideswida, thus miraculously saved, obtained by her prayers the restoration of sight to her persecutor; then, with her father's consent, and after some years passed in solitude, she founded near Oxford, at the spot of her deliverance, a monastery, where a crowd of

[1] See the first chapter of *Ivanhoe*.

[2] "In derelicto porcorum mapali hædera obducto delituit. . . . Nec latibulum latere potuit amantem, nec cordis desidia obfuit, quin persequeretur fugitantem. . . . Ille vi agere intendit. . . . Lenonum ludibrio polluenda. . . . Puella jam de fuga desperans simulque pro lassitudine nusquam progredi potens. . . . Hinc innatus est horror regibus Angliæ, ut nec unus profecto successorum ejus Oxenfordiam præsumatur intrare." —LELAND, *Collectanea*, ap. DUGDALE, vol. i. p. 173. Cf. BOLLAND., vol. viii. Oct., pp. 533–568. Henry III. was the first English king who disregarded this prejudice, and the misfortunes of his reign have been attributed to this presumption.

Saxon virgins ranged themselves under her authority, and where she ended her life, dying in the same year as the Venerable Bede, and consoled during her last sufferings by the apparition of the two virgin martyrs, St. Catherine and St. Cecilia, to whom she had once so successfully appealed.

The tomb of Frideswida, the chapel she erected in the depth of the wood where she had hidden herself, the fountain which sprang at her prayer, attracted up to the thirteenth century a crowd of pilgrims, who were led thither by the fame of the miraculous cures there performed. But of all the miracles collected after her death, none is so touching as that which, told during her lifetime, contributed above everything else to increase the fame of sanctity with which she was soon surrounded. It happened one day that an unfortunate young man, struck with leprosy, met her on the road: from the moment that he perceived her he cried, "I conjure you, virgin Frideswida, by the Almighty God, to kiss me in the name of Jesus Christ, His only Son." The maiden, overcoming the horror felt by all of this fearful disease, approached him, and after having made the sign of the cross, she touched his lips with a sisterly kiss. Soon after the scales of his leprosy fell off, and his body became fresh and wholesome like that of a little child.[1]

The church in which the body of Frideswida rests, and the monastery which she had founded, were the objects of public veneration and the gifts of many kings during the middle ages. It would occupy too much of our space to tell how this monastery passed into the hands of regular canons, and became one of the cradles of the celebrated University of Oxford. Unquestionably the first school which is proved to have existed on this spot, destined to so much literary fame, was attached to the sanctuary of our Anglo-

[1] "Ecce inter turbam . . . adest juvenis immanissima lepra et pustulis toto deforatus (*sic*) corpore. . . . Adjuro te, virgo Frideswida, per Deum omnipotentem, ut des mihi osculum. . . . At illa caritatis, igne succensa illico accessit. . . . Ore virginis os leprosi tangitur, et . . . statim caro ejus sicut caro parvuli efficitur."—BOLLAND., vol. viii. Oct., p. 565.

Saxon princess.[1] Oxford and Westminster,[2] the two greatest names in the intellectual and social history of England, thus both date from the monastic origin, in which is rooted everything which was dear and sacred to Old England.

The monastery of St. Frideswida, tranformed into a college by Cardinal Wolsey, is still, under the name of *Christ Church*, the most considerable college in the University of Oxford. Her church, rebuilt in the twelfth century, is the cathedral of that city.[3] Her body, according to the common opinion, still rests there, and her shrine is shown; but it must be added that, under Elizabeth, and after the final triumph of Anglican reform, a commissioner of the Queen, who has himself related the fact in an official report, believed himself entitled to place beside the relics of Frideswida the body of a disveiled nun married to an apostate priest called Pietro Vermigli, who had been called to Oxford as a reformer and professor of the new doctrine. The commissioner mixed the bones of the saint and those of the concubine in such a manner that it was impossible to distinguish the one from the other, and placed them in a stone coffin, on which he engraved the words, now happily effaced, *Hic requiescit religio cum superstitione.*[4]

III

It may be a matter of surprise that there is nothing in the legend of St. Frideswida, nor in the recollections of the early days of her foundation, to connect them with the incon-

[1] OZANAM, *Notes Inédites sur l'Angleterre.*

[2] See vol. iii. p. 240.

[3] The choir, with its superimposed arches, is specially admirable, as well as the tomb of Guitmond, first prior of the restored monastery in 1549, that of Sir Henry de Bath, Chief-Justice of England in 1251, and the graceful chapter-house of the thirteenth century. At Christ Church resides the celebrated Dr. Pusey, canon of the cathedral.

[4] See the learned and copious article of P. Bossue on St. Frideswida, ap. BOLLAND., vol. viii. Oct., pp. 553-556.

testable traditions which prove the intellectual and literary development of the great nunneries in England, of which something has already been said. We return to the subject, were it only in passing, reserving to ourselves the power of going back upon it when it becomes time to discuss the colonies of learned nuns who, issuing from their insular beehives, lent effectual aid to St. Boniface and the other Anglo-Saxon missionaries of Germany.

It is proved by numerous and undoubted witnesses that literary studies were cultivated during the seventh and eighth centuries in the female monasteries with no less care and perseverance than in the communities of men, and even perhaps with more enthusiasm. Was this, as has been supposed, a consequence of the new spirit which Archbishop Theodore had brought from Greece and Italy, and with which he had inspired all the monastic Church of England? or was it rather a tradition of Frankish Gaul, where the first Anglo-Saxon nuns had been educated, and where the example of Radegund and her companions shows us to what a degree classical habits and recollections found an echo in cloisters inhabited by women alone?[1]

At all events, it is apparent that the Anglo-Saxon nuns interpreted the obligation to work which was imposed on them by their rule, to occupy the time which remained after the performance of their liturgical duties, as applying specially to study. They did not neglect the occupations proper to their sex, as is apparent by the example of the priestly vestments embroidered for Cuthbert by the abbess-queen Etheldreda. They even improved the art of embroidery in gold and silver stuffs, ornamented with pearls and jewels, for the use of the clergy and the Church, so much, that the term "English work" (*opus Anglicum*) was long consecrated to this kind of labour. But the work of the hand was far from satisfying them. They left the distaff and the needle, not only to copy manuscripts and

[1] See vol. ii. p. 174.

ornament them with miniatures, according to the taste of their time, but above all to read and study the holy books, the Fathers of the Church, and even classic authors. All, or almost all, knew Latin. Convent corresponded with convent in that language. Some of them became acquainted with Greek. Some were enthusiastic for poetry and grammar, and all that was then adorned with the name of science. Others devoted themselves more readily to the study of the Pentateuch, the Prophets, and the New Testament, taking for guides the commentaries of the ancient doctors, and seeking out historical, allegorical, or mystic interpretations for the most obscure texts.[1] It has been made apparent by what was said in respect to the cowherd Ceadmon, transformed into a poet and translator of Holy Scripture, to what extent the study of the Bible had been cultivated at Whitby under the reign of the great Abbess Hilda.[2]

Each community of women was thus at once a school and workshop, and no monastic foundation is to be met with which was not, for nuns as well as for monks, a house of education, in the first place for the adults, who formed its first nucleus, and afterwards for the young people who crowded around them.[3] Thus were trained the cultivated nuns who quoted Virgil in writing to St. Boniface, and too often added Latin verses, of their own fashion, to their prose;[4] who copied for him the works he had need of, now the Epistles of St. Peter in gilded letters, now the Prophets

[1] MABILLON, *Annal. Bened.*, vol. ii. p. 143; LINGARD, *Antiquities*, vol. ii. p. 193; and especially KARL ZELL, who, in a recent work, *Lioba und die frommen Angelsächsischen Frauen* (Fribourg, 1860), has most conscientiously treated of all that regards the studies and the whole life of the Anglo-Saxon nuns.

[2] See vol. iii. p. 325.

[3] The following is said of St. Cuthbert's foundation at Carlisle (see above, p. 59): "Ubi sanctimonalium congregatione stabilita . . . in profectum divinæ servitutis scholas instituit."—SIMEON DUNELMENSIS, i. 9.

[4] S. BONIFACII ET LULLI *Epistolæ.*, No. 13, 23, 148, 149; ed. Jaffé.

writ large to suit weak sight;[1] who consoled and nourished him in his exile by the abundance and beauty of the books they sent him; and among whom he found those illustrious fellow-workers, whom one of his biographers declares to have been deeply versed in all liberal studies,[2] and who lent so stout a hand in the conversion of the Germans.

But the example most frequently quoted is that of Barking, where we have seen the wife and sister of Ina, the queen of Northumbria and the queen of Wessex, take the veil in succession, the one during the lifetime, the other after the death, of her husband. The abbess of this convent was Hildelida, whose wise administration and holy life, prolonged to a very advanced age,[3] have been celebrated by Bede, and to whom her friendship with St. Aldhelm and St. Boniface gave additional fame. It was to her and her community that the famous abbot of Malmesbury dedicated his *Praise of Virginity*, composed at first in prose, and which was rewritten in verse at a later period. In this dedication he names, besides the Abbess and Queen Cuthburga, eight other nuns, who were bound to him by ties of blood or of intimate friendship, whose holy fame seemed to him an honour to the Church, and whose many and affectionate letters filled him with joy.[4]

This treatise, like all the other important writings of Aldhelm, is very uninviting to the reader, being full of pedantry and emphasis. But it is very interesting to all who desire to realise the ideas and images which one of the most holy and learned pontiffs of the Anglo-Saxon Church

[1] S. BONAFACII, No. 13, 32, 55.

[2] OTHLO, *De Vita et Virtutibus S. Bonifacii*, p. 490.

[3] "Devota deo famula . . . usque ad ultimam senectutem eidem monasterio strenuissime, in observantia disciplinæ regularis et in earum quæ ad communes usus pertinent rerum providentia præfuit."—*Hist. Eccles.*, iv. 10. Cf. S. BONIFACII *Epist.*, 10, ed. Jaffé.

[4] "Nec non Osburgæ contribulibus necessitudinum nexibus conglutinatis, Aldgidæ ac Scholasticæ, Hildburgæ et Burngidæ, Eulaliæ ac Teclæ, rumore sanctitatis concorditer Ecclesiam ornantibus."—*De Laudibus Virginitatis*, p. 1, ed. Giles.

naturally appealed to, in addressing himself to the nuns of his own country and time. He quotes to them all the great examples of virginity which the Old and New Testaments could supply, or which were to be found in the lives of the Fathers and Doctors, and especially in the history of the martyrs of both sexes. But he also quotes to them Virgil and Ovid, and among others the well-known line—

"Quadrupedante putrem sonitu quatit ungula campum;"

and that from the *Epithalamium*—

"Mellea tunc roseis hærescunt labia labris."[1]

He does not confine himself to a commonplace image, by describing them as bees who seek their honey from the most different flowers. He compares them now to athletes in the circus, taking advantage of the metaphor to make an enumeration of all the Olympian games; now to warlike cohorts engaged in a desperate struggle against what he calls the eight great vices; and anon he borrows his images and exhortations from military life, always mixing, in his singular Latin, modes and turns of expression which are essentially Greek, and which presuppose among several at least of his correspondents a certain acquaintance with the Greek language. The last lines of his treatise breathe a touching humility and tenderness. He compares himself, a poor sinner—who, still plunged in the waves of corruption, shows to others the perfect shore of the perfect land—to a deformed painter who has undertaken to represent the features of beauty. "Help me, then, dear scholars of Christ," he says; "let your prayers be the reward of my work, and, as you have so often promised me, may your community be my advocates before the Almighty. Farewell, you who are the flowers of the Church, the pearls of Christ, the jewels of Paradise, the heirs of the celestial

[1] *De Laudibus Virginitatis*, c. 35.

country, but who are also my sisters according to monastic rule, and my pupils by the lessons I have given you."[1]

Nor were the nuns of Barking the only ones to whom Aldhelm addressed the effusions of his unwearied pen and his laboriously classic muse; and we are expressly told that the works he dedicated to them were very popular among all who followed the same career.[2] Many of his letters and poems are addressed to nuns whose names are not given, but of whom he begs not only intercession with God, but protection against criticism here below.[3] The communities who were honoured by his visits or by his correspondence took pleasure, no doubt, in his play on words, and in the Greco-Latin acrostics and verbal refinements with which the celebrated prelate adorned his prose and verse; and insignificant as this kind of production appears to us now, it implies nevertheless a certain degree of literary culture generally diffused throughout the Anglo-Saxon cloisters.

But the interest which attaches to this revelation of an intellectual movement among the Anglo-Saxon nuns is increased when it is remarked that intellectual pursuits, though intensely appreciated, were far from holding the first place in the heart and spirit of these new aspirants to literary glory. The salvation of souls and the tender union of hearts carried the day over all the rest. In a letter written to an abbess distinguished by birth as well as by knowledge and piety, enclosing to her a series of leonine verses he had made on a journey he had taken into Cornwall, Aldhelm takes pains to demonstrate that he is specially

[1] "Pulchrum depinxi hominem pictor fœdus, aliosque ad perfectionis litus dirigo, qui adhuc in delictorum fluctibus versor. . . . Valete, o flores Ecclesiæ, sorores monasticæ, alumnæ scholasticæ, Christi margaritæ, paradisi gemmæ, et cœlestis patriæ participes."—*De Laudibus Virginitatis*, c. 60.

[2] "Berkingensium quidem nomini dedicata; sed omnibus eamdem professionem anhelantibus valitura."—GUILLELM. MALMESB., i. 35.

[3] "Sed vos virgineis comit quas infula sertis,
Hoc opus adversus querulos defendite scurras," &c.
—S. ALDHELMI *Opera*, p. 213, ed. Giles.

inspired by a tender gratitude towards her who of all women has shown him the most faithful affection.[1] And another called Osgitha, whom he exhorts to a careful study of the Holy Scriptures, he addresses as his beloved sister, ten times, and even a hundred, a thousand times beloved.[2]

Let us here take leave of Aldhelm and his learned correspondents, reminding our readers that one of his most important acts, that by which he consented to remain abbot of his three monasteries after his elevation to the episcopate, is dated from Winbourne,[3] which was the great feminine community of Wessex, founded by King Ina, and ruled by his sister Cuthburga. It was at the same time the monastery most famed for literary activity. The education of the young novices was the object of the most active and scrupulous care. Intellectual labour alternated with the works of the needle; but it is expressly said of Lioba, the nun whose name has thrown most lustre upon that community, the holy companion of Boniface in his German apostleship, that she devoted much more time to reading and studying the Holy Scriptures than to manual labour.[4] Let us also not forget that the development of spiritual fervour by prayer and the continual celebration of the monastic liturgy occupied much the greatest place in the employment of the time and strength of all these young and generous souls.

There were five hundred nuns at Winbourne, who were all present at the nightly service.[5] It is easy to imagine

[1] "Nullam reperisse me istic habitantium feminini sexus personam fideliorem."—S. ALDHELMI *Opera*, p. 104.

[2] "Dilectissimæ atque amantissimæ sorori. . . . Saluto te diligenter, Osgitha, ex intimo cordis cubiculo. . . . Vale! decies dilectissima, imo, centies et millies."—*Ibid.*, p. 90.

[3] Ap. GILES, p. 351. Cf. above, p. 43.

[4] "Crevit ergo puella et tanta abbatissæ omniumque sororum cura erudiebatur, ut nihil aliud præter monasterium et cœlestis disciplinæ studia cognosceret. . . . Quando non legebat, operabatur manibus ea quæ sibi injuncta erant. . . . Lectioni tamen atque auditioni sanctarum Scripturarum magis quam labori manuum operam impendit."—*Vita S. Liobæ*, auct. RUDOLPHO, c. 7, ap. *Acta SS. O. S. B.*, vol. iv.

[5] *Vita S. Liobæ*, c. 5.

how much authority, intelligence, and watchfulness were necessary to rule such a crowd of young souls, all, no doubt, inspired with the love of heaven, but all, at the same time, sprung from races too newly converted to have freed themselves from the characteristic features of Saxon pride and rudeness. This necessity explains why princesses of those ancient dynasties, whom the Anglo-Saxons were accustomed to follow even without always respecting them, were everywhere sought for as superiors of the great communities; and why, after the sister of King Ina, another sister of the king, Tetta,[1] was called to the government of Winbourne, at the time when Lioba was being educated there. Among the crowd of minor authorities who lent their aid to this zealous and pious abbess was the provost (*præposita*), the deaconess (*decana*), the portress, whose business it was to close the church after complines and to ring the bell for matins, and who was furnished with an immense collection of keys, some of silver, others of copper or iron, according to their different destinations.[2] But neither the rank nor moral influence of the princess-abbess was always successful in restraining the barbarous impetuosity of that monastic youth. The nun who held the first rank among them after the abbess, and who was principally occupied with the care of the novices, made herself odious by her extreme severity: when she died, the hate which she inspired burst forth without pity: she was no sooner buried than the novices and young nuns rushed to the churchyard, and began to jump and dance upon her tomb, as if to tread underfoot her detested corpse. This went so far that the soil, freshly filled in, which covered the remains of their enemy, sank half a foot below the level of the surrounding ground. The abbess had great trouble to make them feel what she called

[1] "Huic ergo loco post nonnullas abbatissas et spiritales matres præ lata est virgo religiosa nomine *Tetta*, genere quidem secundum sæculi dignitatem nobilis (soror quippe regis erat), morum autem probitate et sanctarum spectamine virtutum multo nobilior."—*Vita S. Liobæ*, c. 2.

[2] *Ibid.*, c. 5.

the hardness and cruelty of their hearts, and which she punished by imposing upon them three days of fasting and prayers for the deceased.[1]

IV

All that remains to be said of the strange but general institution of double monasteries—that is, two distinct communities of monks and nuns living together in the same place and under the same government—may be attached to the name of Winbourne. It is of all the establishments of this kind the one whose organisation is best known to us. We have already met with the institution in Frankish Gaul, with St. Radegund and St. Columbanus, at Poitiers, at Remiremont, and elsewhere. We shall find them again in Belgium and Germany as soon as the monastic missionaries shall have carried the light of the Gospel there. Their origin has been largely discussed,[2] and we do not pretend to give any decision on the subject. Examples may be found among the Fathers of the desert in Egypt, and as far back as the times of St. Pacome,[3] who, however, placed the Nile between the two communities under his government. We have already pointed out a remarkable attempt at the same institution in Spain caused by the

[1] "Nec tamen conquievit animus juvenum odientium eam, quin statim ut aspicerent locum in quo sepulta est, maledicerent crudelitati ejus; immo ascendentes tumulum, et quasi funestum cadaver conculcantes, in solatium doloris sui amarissimis insultationibus mortuæ exprobrarent. Quod cum mater congregationis venerabilis Tetta comperisset, temerariam juvencularum præsumptionem correptionis vigore compescens, perrexit ad tumulum et mirum in modum conspexit terram quæ desuper congesta erat subsedisse et usque ad semi pedis spatium infra summitatem sepulcri descendisse."—*Vita S. Liobæ*, c. 3.

[2] MABILLON, *Ann. Bened.*, vol. i. p. 125; LANIGAN, *Eccles. Hist. of Ireland*, vol. ii. pp. 19, 20; LINGARD, *Antiquities*, vol. i. 212; and above all VARIN, 2d *Memoir*, already frequently quoted.

[3] See vol. i. p. 230. Cf. PALLADIUS, *Hist. Lausiaca*, 30-42; BOLLAND., vol. iii. May, p. 304.

prodigious crowd of monastic neophytes of both sexes who gathered round St. Fructuosus.[1] Notwithstanding the assertion of Muratori to the contrary, the unassailable testimony of Bede proves that there was at least one community of the same kind in Rome in the middle of the seventh century.[2]

These establishments, however, were more popular in Ireland than anywhere else, where they sprang spontaneously from the beginning of the conversion of the island, to such a point that the apostle of the country, St. Patrick, saw himself obliged to forestall by wise precautions the disorders and scandals which might have arisen from the too close and frequent intercourse of the monks and nuns.[3] At the same time, the first pontiffs and missionaries of Hibernia, strong in the exceptional purity of the Irish temperament, which has continued to our own day the glorious privilege of the race, and strong above all in their own fervour and exclusive passion for the salvation of souls, feared neither the society of the women they had converted, nor the charge of governing them when they wished to devote themselves to God.[4] Less assured of themselves,

[1] See above, vol. ii. p. 109.

[2] "Cum monachum quemdam de vicino *Virginum* monasterio, nomine Andream, pontifici offerret, hic ab omnibus qui novere, dignus episcopatu judicatus est."—*Hist. Eccl.*, vol. iv. p. 1. Muratori maintains that double monasteries have always been unknown in Italy.—*Antiquit. Medii Ævi*, vol. v. p. 527.

[3] "Sanxivit ut a mulieribus viri sequestrarentur, et utrique sua ædificia et oratoria distincta construerentur."—JOCELINUS, *Vit. S. Patr.*, ap. BOLLAND., p. 592. The ninth canon of the 2d council, which is attributed to him, is thus expressed: "Monachus et virgo, unus ab hinc et alia ab aliunde, in uno hospitio non commeant, nec in uno curru a villa in villam discurrant, nec assidue invicem confabulationem exerceant."—Ap. COLETTI, vol. iv. p. 754.

[4] "Mulierum administrationem et consortia non respuebant: quia super petram Christi fundati, ventum tentationis non timebant."—Original text quoted by Ussher. To this category of the saints there may be added Bishop Dega Maccaryl (already spoken of above, vol. ii. p. 430), who died in 589, and of whom it is said: "Confluxerunt undiquv ad eum sanctæ virgines, ut *sub ejus regula* degerent. . . . Moniales illas versus septen-

if not more humble, their successors, those who are described as *saints of the second order* in the hagiographical annals of Ireland, declined the responsibility of administering the more or less numerous communities of virgins who grouped themselves around the older saints.[1] They carried this restriction so far as to refuse access to their retreat even to recluses who came to seek the viaticum from them.[2] However, the custom of combining the foundation, or at least the administration, of nunneries, along with that of similar communities of men, continued to prevail. But as the holy abbots declined to undertake the charge of nuns, the conditions had to be reversed. From this fact, no doubt, arose the singular custom universally established from the seventh century, not in Ireland, where I can find no example of it, but in all the Irish colonies, of two united communities, placed, not the nuns under the rule of an ecclesiastic, but the monks under that of the abbess of their neighbouring nuns.

trionem ducens, in diversis locis diversa monasteria, in quibus cum aliis virginibus seorsum Deo servirent, eis, prout decuit, construxit."—BOLLAND., vol. iii. August, p. 660. It appears also that a neighbouring abbot reproached the holy bishop, "ut eum de susceptione virginum objurgaret."

There is also the case of the thirty girls enamoured of St. Mochuda, who ended by becoming nuns under his authority, already mentioned, vol. ii. p. 431. And also that of St. Monynna, the contemporary of St. Patrick, who, with eight other virgins and a widow, went to the holy bishop Ibar, and "longo tempore sub ipsius disciplina cum multis aliis virginibus permansit."—BOLLAND., vol. ii. July, p. 291.

[1] "Pauci episcopi et multi presbyteri, diversas missas celebrabant, et diversas regulas; unum Pascha XIV. luna; unam tonsuram ab aure ad aurem; *abnegabant mulierum administrationem*, separantes eas a monasteriis."—Text quoted by Ussher.

[2] This is related of St. Senanus, who, about 530, founded a monastery in an island at the mouth of the Shannon, where no woman was permitted to disembark:—

"Cui præsul: quid feminis
Commune est cum monachis?
Nec te nec ullam aliam
Admittemus in insulam."
Vita Rhythmica, ap. LANIGAN, ii. 7.

Such was the state of things in the foundations which we have seen develop under the influence of St. Columbanus, the Irish apostle of the Gauls, in the Vosges, in the valley of the Marne and of the Seine; and such too are the conditions which we shall find in Belgium when we consider the monastic influence of the Irish and Britons there. The Anglo-Saxon princesses devoted to the cloister found this custom established in the houses where they received their monastic education in Gaul, at Faremoutier, les Andelys, Chelles, and Jouarre,[1] and brought it into England, where it was immediately adopted; for of all the great nunneries of which we have spoken, not one was without a monastery of clerks or priests placed at the gates of the community of nuns, and ruled by their abbess.[2] Let us recall only Whitby, where the Princess Hilda directed the monastery-school, the nursery of so many bishops and missionaries, but of which the cow-herd-poet Ceadmon, so often quoted, remains the principal celebrity;[3] and Ely, where Queen Etheldreda attracted by her example, and arrayed under her authority, not only holy priests, but even men of elevated rank in secular life.[4] No doubt the necessity of providing for the spiritual wants, in the first place, of the numerous nuns who filled these monasteries, and of the lay population spread over the vast lands which the foundress, generally a princess of the reigning dynasty, conferred upon her community, contributed more than anything else to the extension of so singular a custom. The priests and clerks charged with this double mission found themselves naturally collected in a sort of community under the authority of her who was at once the spiritual superior

[1] BEDE, iii. 8. MABILLON, *Acta SS. O. S. B.*, i. 420, iii. 20.

[2] "Erat eo tempore monasteriis feminarum, amplis præsertim ac numerosis, conjuncta virorum, qui iis sacra administrarent, et familiam reliquam erudirent: eidem tamen abbatissæ omnes obediebant."—BOLLAND., *De S. Cedmono*, vol. ii. February, p. 552.

[3] See vol. iii. p. 326.

[4] See above, p. 23. Another instance is that of Repton, where St. Guthlac became a monk under the Abbess Elfrida. See p. 284 of this volume.

and the lady—the seigneuress, if such a word may be used —of the monastic lands.[1] The whole together formed a sort of vast family, governed by a mother instead of a father, maternity being the natural form of authority—all the more so as the neophytes were often admitted with all their dependants, as was Ceadmon, who entered Whitby with all belonging to him, including a child of three years old, whom Bede describes as being nursed and cared for in the cell of the learned nuns of Barking.[2]

The Greco-Asiatic Archbishop Theodore, when he came from Rome to complete the organisation of the Anglo-Saxon Church,[3] does not appear to have relished this institution, which was not unknown to the Christian East, but which had probably left equivocal recollections behind it. In one of his charges he forbids all new foundations of this description, though respecting those which already existed.[4] But, like so many other canons and decrees, his prohibition was disregarded; communities founded after his death, like Winbourne, were in full flower in the eighth century, and nothing indicates that double monasteries had ceased to flourish up to the general destruction of monasteries by the Danes at the end of the ninth century. They were swept away by that calamity, and no trace of them is to be found in the monastic revival of which King Alfred and the great Abbot Dunstan were the authors. It was a peculiarity belonging to the youth of the Church, which, like youth in all circumstances, went through all the difficulties, dangers, storms, and

[1] LINGARD, *Antiquities*, vol. i. p. 212.

[2] "Cædmon . . . susceptum in monasterium cum omnibus suis fratrum cohorti associavit."—*Hist. Eccl.*, iv. 24. "Puer trium circiter annorum . . . qui propter infantilem adhuc ætatem in virginum Deo dedicatarum solebat cella nutriri, ibique medicari."—*Ibid.*, iv. 8. We meet with many examples of a mother and daughter or two sisters being dedicated to God in the same convent.—Cf. BEDE, v. 3.

[3] See vol. iii. p. 425.

[4] "Non licet viris feminas habere monachas, neque feminis viros, tamen non destruamus illud quod consuetudo est in hac terra."—*Capitula et Fragmenta*, ap. THORPE, *Ancient Laws and Institutes*, p. 307.

disorders of nature proper to that age, which disappear in maturer times.

This institution, however, is a new and very striking proof of the power of woman in the social order, a fact which we have already pointed out, following the example of Tacitus both among the Germans and Britons.[1] Maintained, consolidated, and, in certain respects, sanctified by the Christian spirit among the Anglo-Saxons, it has remained very powerful in the race. It has produced that deference at once official and popular for the weaker sex, and, I willingly add, that public modesty of which the Anglo-Saxons of the present day in the United States give us so brilliant and honourable an example in their primary schools for boys, directed often in the midst of great cities by young girls, who are protected against all outrage, and even all sarcasm, by the universal respect of both fathers and sons.[2]

Let us hasten to add that even at this primitive period no traces of the abuses or disorders which the suspicious spirit of modern criticism might summon into being are to be found. This is explained by the precautions everywhere to be met with when double monasteries existed, and which seem never to have been discontinued. The double family lived separate, in two buildings entirely distinct,[3] though near. As a general rule the nuns did not leave their cloister, and the monks were strictly forbidden to enter the enclosure reserved to the nuns, without the permission of the abbess and the presence of several witnesses. At Winbourne, which must always be quoted as the type of establishments of this description, the two monasteries rose side by side, like two

[1] "Neque enim sexum in imperio discernunt."—*Agric.*, c. 16. "Soli tum Britannis feminarum ductu bellare."—*Annal.*, xiv. 35.

[2] EMILE DE LAVELEYE, *De l'Instruction Publique en Amérique*, confirmed by the accounts of all impartial travellers.

[3] "Multi de fratribus ejusdem monasterii qui aliis erant in sedibus" (BEDE, iii. 8), regarding Faremoutier. "Eam monasterii partem, qua ancillarum Dei caterva a virorum erat secreta contubernio" (*Ibid.*, iv. 7), as to Barking.

fortresses, each surrounded by battlemented walls. The austerity of primitive discipline existed in full vigour at the time when Lioba, who was destined, under the auspices of St. Boniface, to introduce conventual life among the women of Germany, resided there. The priests were bound to leave the church immediately after the celebration of mass, bishops themselves were not admitted into the nunnery, and the abbess communicated with the external world, to give her orders to her spiritual and temporal subjects, only through a barred window.[1]

Coldingham is the only great community of this kind mentioned in history, the memory of which is not irreproachable, a fact which has been already mentioned in treating of the historical position of the Northumbrian princess, Ebba, foundress of that house.[2] It must, however, be fully granted that the scandals pointed out by the severe and sincere Bede are not such as we might be tempted to expect; they are rather failures in obedience to the cloistral rule, than any infringements of Christian morality. These scandals, besides, whether small or great, were gloriously atoned for in the following century, when, under another Ebba, the nuns of Coldingham, to escape from the brutality of the Danish conquerors, cut off their noses and lips, and by their heroic self-mutilation added the palm of martyrdom to that of virginity.[3]

With this single exception, the unanimous testimony of

[1] "Porro ipsa congregationis mater, quando aliquid exteriorum pro utilitate monasterii ordinare vel mandare necesse erat, per fenestram loquebatur, et inde decernebat quæcumque ordinanda aut mandanda utilitatis ratio exigebat. . . . Virgines vero cum quibus ipsa indesinenter manebat, adeo immunes a virorum voluit esse consortio, ut non tantum laicis aut clericis, verum etiam ipsis quoque episcopis in congregationem earum negaret ingressum."—*Vita S. Liobæ*, auct. RUDOLPHO, c. 2, ap. *Acta SS. O. S. B.*, sæc. iii. p. 2.

[2] See vol. iii. p. 333.

[3] "Exemplum . . . non solum sanctimonialibus illis proficuum, verum etiam omnibus successuris virginibus æternaliter amplectendum."—MATTH. WEST., ROG. WENDOV., RIC. CIRENC., ii. 70.

contemporary authors, as well as of more recent annalists, does full homage to the obedience to rule, the fervour, and even austerity of the double monasteries among the Anglo-Saxons. A great number of the most illustrious female saints, and prelates most distinguished by their virtues and knowledge, were educated in these communities, which were surrounded by universal veneration, and whose pure fame was never tarnished by the breath of calumny.[1]

Is this to say that all was perfect in the monastic institutions of the country and time which I have undertaken to bring to the knowledge of the world? God forbid that I should thus attempt to deceive my readers. The more I advance in my laborious and thankless task—that is to say, the nearer I approach to my grave—the more do I feel mastered and overpowered by an ardent and respectful love of truth, the more do I feel myself incapable of betraying truth, even for the benefit of what I most love here below. The mere idea of adding a shadow to those which already shroud it fills me with horror. To veil the truth, to hide it, to forsake it under the pretence of serving the cause of religion, which is nothing but supreme truth, would be, in my opinion, to aggravate a lie by a kind of sacrilege. Forgive me, all timid and scrupulous souls! But I hold that in history everything should be sacrificed to truth—that it must be always spoken, on every subject, and in its full integrity. The lying panegyric, where truth is sacrificed merely by leaving out what is true, is quite as repugnant to me as the invectives of calumny.

I have therefore sought with conscientious care for evidences of all the abuses and disorders which could exist in English monasteries, and especially in nunneries. If I have found almost nothing, it is not for want of having thoroughly searched through the historians and other writers of the time. I may then venture to conclude that evil, which is inseparable from everything human,

[1] LINGARD, *loc. cit.*

has left fewer traces in the Anglo-Saxon cloisters than elsewhere.

I hesitate to insist with the same severity which was shown by the pontiffs and doctors of the time on the first of their complaints against the Anglo-Saxon communities, the excessive liking for rich and fine stuffs, in which certain nuns loved to dress themselves after having made them. These wonders of the distaff and broidery-needle, as they were used in the English cloisters, excited not only the anxiety but the indignation of the masters of spiritual life. Bede found nothing more serious to note in the transgressions which were to draw down the wrath of Heaven upon Coldingham.[1] Boniface, when he became archbishop and pontifical legate in Germany, did not hesitate to indicate this as one of the greatest dangers of monastic life.[2] Aldhelm exerts all his rhetoric to preserve his friends at Barking from the revolting luxury displayed by the clergy of both sexes in their vestments, and especially by the abbesses and nuns, who wore scarlet and violet tunics, hoods and cuffs trimmed with furs and silk; who curled their hair with a hot iron all round their foreheads; who changed their veil into an ornament, arranging it in such a way as to make it fall to their feet; and who, finally, sharpened and bent their nails so as to make them like the claws of falcons and other birds of prey, destined by nature to chase the vermin upon which they feed.[3]

[1] "Texendis subtilioribus indumentis operam dant, quibus at seipsas ad vicem sponsarum in periculum sui status adornent, aut externorum sibi virorum amicitiam comparent. Unde merito . . . de cœlo vindicta flammis sævientibus præparata est."—*Hist. Eccles.*, iv. 25.

[2] "Ut clericos et sanctimoniales de tenuitate et pompa vestium argueret."—GUILL. MALMESB., c. 82, p. 115. See above the text of the letter.

[3] "Subucula bissina, sive hyacinthea, tunica coccinea capitium et manicæ sericis clavate calliculæ rubricatis pellibus ambiuntur, anticæ frontis et temporum cicini calamistro crispantur, pulla capitis velamina candidis et coloratis mafortibus cedunt, quæ vittarum nexibus assutæ talo tenus prolixius dependunt, ungues ritu falconum et accipitrum, seu certe cavannarum (*sic*) quos naturaliter ingenita edendi necessitas instigat, obunca

The Council of Cloveshove, however, justified these accusations by ordaining the monks and nuns to keep to the costume of their predecessors, and in particular to recall to their minds the simple and pure dress which they put on in the day of their profession, that they might no longer resemble by a too gay exterior the women of the world.[1]

Let us pass on to facts of a graver nature. Do we not meet on our path some of those disorders which, in modern times, the religious orders have been accused of as unpardonable crimes? Has compulsion never been employed to impose monastic life upon the young Anglo-Saxons? I am led to suppose that such a thing must sometimes have occurred when I read in the *Penitentiary* of Archbishop Theodore that daughters whom their parents had compelled to become nuns should be exempted from all punishment, even spiritual, if they married afterwards.[2]

Was the virginal modesty of these *brides of the Lord*, which the Anglo-Saxons, surrounded by so much national and popular veneration, always respected by those who occupied the first rank in the newly-converted nations, and for that reason ought to have shown them an example?

I am obliged to admit that this was not the case. Contemporary documents of unquestionable authority prove that more than one Anglo-Saxon king seems to have taken special pleasure in seeking his prey among the virgins consecrated to God.[3] It is probable that the princes and nobles followed but too often the example of the kings.

pedum fuscinula et rapaci ungularum arpigine alites et sorices crudeliter insectando grassari."—*De Laudibus Virginit.*, c. 58. Cf. c. 17 and 56.

[1] "Non debent iterum habere indumenta sæcularia, et ornatis et nitidis vestibus incedere, quibus laicæ puellæ uti solent."—Can. 28, ap. COLETTI, vol. viii. p. 331.

[2] "Puellæ quæ *non parentum coactæ imperio*, sed spontaneo judicio, virginitatis propositum atque habitum susceperunt, si postea nuptias diligunt, prævaricantur, etiamsi consecratio non accesserit."—*Liber Pœnitentialis*, c. xvi. § 24, ap. THORPE, p. 282.

[3] See what is said above, quoting the epistles of St. Boniface, as to Osred, king of Northumbria, and Ceolred and Ethelbald, kings of Mercia.

Besides divers instances which have retained a place in history, the many provisions of the penal laws under the Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman kings, from Alfred to Henry I., against the rape of nuns—even when followed by subsequent marriage—and other outrages to their modesty, prove that such crimes were sufficiently well known to exact habitual and energetic repression.[1] It is but too easy to imagine the fascination with which men still half barbarians must have been attracted towards the crowds of young girls, often beautiful and of high lineage, always pure, well educated, and trained in the utmost delicacy to which civilisation then reached, who were gathered together in the spiritual fortresses which might guard them against the temptations of secular life, but were ineffectual to protect them from the assaults of the great ones of this earth, traditionally accustomed to sacrifice everything to the gratification of their passions.

Still more surprising and afflicting are the decrees given by the principal spiritual legislators of the country, the great archbishops, Theodore of Canterbury and Egbert of York, which foresee and punish transgressions of cloistral continence in which violence could have no part, and which

[1] The laws of Alfred foresaw and punished offences against the purity of nuns by the following regulations :—

"§ 8. *De concubitu nunne.* Qui duxerit sanctimonialem ab ecclesia, sine licentia regis aut episcopi, amende de 120 sols;" half to the king, half to the bishop "et ipsius ecclesiæ domino cujus monacha fuit." If she survives him, "qui eam abduxit, nihil de pecunia ejus habeat." If she has a child, "nihil inde habeat infans, sicut nec mater ejus."

"§ 18. Si quis nunnam causa fornicationis, in vestes aut in sinum, sine licentia comprehendat, sit hoc duplo amendabile, sicut antea de laica decrevimus."—Ap. THORPE, pp. 32, 34, fol. ed.

The same offence is punished by section 4 of King Edmond's ecclesiastical laws (940–946) by deprivation of Christian burial, "unless he make bot, no more than a man-slayer."

Art. 39 of the laws of the Council of Enham, under Ethelred, says, "If any one defile a nun, let him make bot deeply before God and the world." The law of Henry I., art. 73, *De nunne concubitu*, orders the culprit to go to Rome: "adeat Papam et consilium ejus scire faciat."

lead us to suppose that such crimes might be committed even by those whose duty it was to watch over the purity of the sanctuary—those whose sacred character ought to have imposed upon them the strongest of all restraints—by priests and even bishops.[1] Let us state, however, that, at least during the period of which we have spoken, history reports no known incident which gives support to the humiliating provisions of the law; and we may add that Archbishop Theodore might have brought from his Eastern home the fear or recollection of certain excesses and corruptions which were strange to the character and habits of the Northern nations, and have given them a place in his laws under the form of useful warnings. We should run the risk of falling into injustice and absurdity did we draw from such and such a provision of the penal code the conclusion that crimes thus stigmatised and punished were habitually committed by the nation which by its laws protested against them.[2]

Impartiality, besides, requires us to remind our readers of all that has been already said in respect to the abuses that had crept into the monastic order from the time of

[1] The *Liber Pœnitentialis* of Theodore (chap. xvi.) provides for the case where a layman "fornicationem iniretur cum multis . . . sanctimonialibus, *ita ut etiam numerum nesciat*," and condemns the culprit to ten years' fasting, three on bread and water. Chap. xviii., *De fornicatione clericorum*, gives twelve years of penance to a guilty bishop, ten to a priest, eight to a monk or deacon, five to a clerk. The nun is equally punished. If there are children, the penance is prolonged to fifteen, twelve, ten, eight, and six years.

The married layman "maculans se cum ancilla Dei:" six years, two with bread and water; seven years if he has a child; five if he is not married. His companion in guilt the same.

"§ 20. Si quis monacham quam ancillam Dei appellant, in conjugio duxerit, anathema sit."—Ap. THORPE, pp. 282, 283.

"Monachus vel puella consecrata, si fornicati fuerint, septem annos jejunent."—ECGBERTI, Arch. Ebor., *Confessionale*, art. 13. Cf. ECGBERTI *Excerptiones*, No. 134 and 136.

[2] What, for example, would be thought of a historian who from the text of art. 310 of our Penal Code concluded that the offence it punishes was common in France?

Bede; upon the false monasteries which were nothing but lands worked to the profit of lay donors ridiculously tricked out in the title of abbot; and upon the false monks and nuns who inhabited these contraband monasteries, and lived there in every kind of disorder.[1] To these pretenders, who, notwithstanding their known character, bore nevertheless the title of *monachi* or *sanctimoniales*, are no doubt to be most generally imputed the excesses assailed in the ordinances of the English metropolitans and by the letters of St. Boniface; and let us hope that the accusation conveyed in the terrible and untranslatable words of his letter to the king of Mercia, "*Illæ meretrices, sive monasteriales sive sæculares*,"[2] may be referred to the same class. Finally, it may be added that the great apostle, who was inspired at once by love of religion and desire for the honour of his country, spoke only by hearsay; that his most violent accusations are tempered by expressions of doubt; and that he never himself complained on his own authority of anything he had personally known or seen before his departure for Germany, but only what had been carried to him by report, more or less well founded, during the course of his missions in Germany.

[1] We may here recall the passage already partially quoted: "Quod enim turpe est dicere, tot sub nomine monasteriorum loca (*sic*) hi qui monachicæ vitæ prorsus sunt expertes in suam ditionem acceperunt. . . . Vel majore scelere atque impudentia, qui propositum castitatis non habent, luxuriæ ac fornicationi deserviant, neque ab ipsis sacratis Deo virginibus abstineant."—BEDÆ, *Epist. ad Ecgbert.*, c. 6.

[2] *Epistolæ* S. BONIFACII, No. 59, ed. Jaffé, p. 175. He says also, in a letter to Archbishop Egbert of York: "Inauditum enim malum est præteritis sæculis et in triplo vel quadruplo sodomitanam luxuriam vincens, ut gens Christiana . . . despiciat legitima matrimonia . . . et nefanda stupra consecratarum et velatarum feminarum sequatur."—*Ibid.*, No. 61.

V

The correspondence of St. Boniface, which is a precious and unique mine[1] of information as to the ideas and institutions of the Teutonic races at their entrance into Christianity, reveals to us besides, in many aspects, the spirit which reigned in the cloisters inhabited by Anglo-Saxon nuns. Before as well as after his apostolic career in Germany, Winefred, the most illustrious monk in Essex, kept up frequent and intimate intercourse with the most distinguished nuns of his country. The letters which he wrote to them, and those which he received from them, acquired a double interest after his departure for the yet unexplored regions in which martyrdom awaited him. Only a very small number of them remains to us; but the few which have been preserved suffice to afford us a glimpse of what was passing in the souls of these generous, intelligent, and impassioned women, whose life was passed in the shadow of monasteries, and among whom the great missionary found not only devoted sympathy, but the most active and useful assistants.

It is evident, in the first place, from this picture, that all was not happiness and gentleness in the cloister. We are all apt to exaggerate both in the past and present the peace and serenity of religious life amid the storms either of the ancient world, so violent, warlike, and unsettled, or of modern society, so frivolous in its emotions, so servile, and so changeable in its servility. We are right to look upon

[1] It may be remarked that the usefulness of this collection is greatly lessened by the mania of each of its editors (Würdwein in 1789, Giles in 1844, and Migne in 1863), subsequent to the first publication by Serrarius in 1605, for changing the order and numbering of the Epistles. We have adopted the numbers given in the last and extremely correct edition by Jaffé (*Monumenta Moguntina*, in *Bibliotheca Rerum Germanicarum*, vol. iii., Berolini, 1866), who thinks he has succeeded in introducing a certain chronological order entirely wanting in the older editions.

the cloister as a nest suspended amid the branches of a great tree shaken by the winds, or like the inner chamber of a vessel beaten by the waves. It is in the midst of the storm, yet in it there is shelter; a refuge always threatened, always fragile, always perishable, but still a refuge. Outside is the noise of the waves, the rain, and the thunder; at every moment destruction is possible, or even near. But in the meantime the soul is safe; it is calm, protected, preserved, and sails on with humble confidence towards the port. Such a joy is sufficiently tempered by the sense of insecurity to be safe from becoming in itself a danger, a temptation to laxity or to pride.

But in this nest and in this bark, preserved from external tempests, how many storms and perils and sunken rocks are within! Even in the midst of the most peaceful and best regulated community, what a trial is there in the daily death of individual will! in the long hours of obscurity and silence which succeed to the effort and impulse of sacrifice! and in the perpetual sacrifice, continually borne, continually renewed! A modern master of spiritual life has said, with severe clear-sightedness, "The continuity alone of the exercises, which, although varied, have always something in them that goes against human inclinations, *from the moment that they are done by rule and for the service of God*, becomes very fatiguing."[1] What a ray of pitiless light is thus thrown upon the weakness of the human heart! It accustoms itself to the rules, habits, and even to the most onerous obligations which have a purely earthly aim. But from the moment that it is a work for God, dislike appears. The difficulty must be met and surmounted day by day. This is the great exertion, and also the infinite merit, of cloistral life.

If this is the case even among our contemporaries, who

[1] Notice of the Société de la Sainte-Retraite, commenced at Fontenelles, in the diocese of Besançon, 1787, by M. Receveur, p. 19 of the text corrected in 1791.

have been so long fashioned by Christian education and discipline, what must have been the effect upon the Saxon maidens of the seventh and eighth centuries, sprung from a race still new and young in the ways of the Lord, and which was still so impetuous, so turbulent, so enamoured of its own strength, freedom, and untamed independence? To the material restraint, which, though voluntarily accepted, might well lie heavy upon them, were added other privations of which they had not perhaps calculated beforehand all the extent. Hence those restrained but incurable agitations, those cries of distress, those vague but ardent and impetuous desires, which break forth in the pages on which they poured out their hearts to the greatest and holiest of their countrymen.

It is to be regretted that these candid and eager souls had recourse to Latin to express their emotions and confidences. If they had employed their native idiom instead of a language which, though not dead, since it is the language of spiritual life, must have cost them many efforts ere they became familiar with it, we should no doubt have seen their thoughts flow forth more freely, precipitating themselves in tumultuous waves, in abrupt movements, bearing the characteristic mark of a powerful and impassioned originality, like the verse of Ceadmon or the poem of Beowulf. Even under the artificial constraint imposed upon them by the use of Latin, the reader feels the swelling life and force of an original, sincere, and vehement nature.

The most striking peculiarity of these letters, in which unpractised hands reveal, in Latin more or less classical, and in superlatives more or less elegant, the agitations of their hearts, is the necessity they feel to express the tenderness, we might even say the passion, which animates them. The intensity of the affection which united some of them to each other may be imagined from the tender enthusiasm of language with which they address the monk who has gained their confidence. Here is an example taken from a letter

written to Winefred, after the first success of his mission in Germany, by the Abbess Bugga, who is supposed to have been the daughter of a king of Wessex, and who was consequently of the same race as her illustrious correspondent[1]:—

"I do not cease to thank God for all that I have learned by your blessed letter; that He has led you mercifully through so many unknown countries; that He has favourably inclined towards you the heart of the Pontiff of glorious Rome; that He has cast down before you the enemy of the Catholic Church, Radbod the Frisian. But I declare to you that no revolution of time, no human vicissitude, can change the state of my mind towards you, nor turn it from loving you as I am resolved. The fervour of love so inspires me, that I am profoundly convinced of arriving at certain repose by your prayers. I renew, then, my entreaties to you to intercede in favour of my lowliness with the Lord. I have not yet been able to obtain the *Passions of the Martyrs*, which you ask me for. I will get them as soon as I can. But you, dearest, send me, for my consolation, that collection of *Extracts* from the Holy Scriptures which you have promised me in your sweet letter. I beseech you to offer the oblation of the holy mass for one of my relations, called N., whom I loved above all. I send you by the bearer of these lines fifty sols and an altar-cloth; I have not been able to procure anything better. It is a little gift, but is offered you with great love."[2]

[1] There are two, if not three, nuns of the name of Bugga among Boniface's correspondents. We agree with the editor of *Notes* on the monastic tombs discovered at Hackness, p. 35, that the one here alluded to is the same whose ecclesiastical buildings are celebrated in the poem by St. Aldhelm (MIGNE, *Patrology*, vol. lxxxix. p. 289), and to whom St. Boniface wrote his letter 86, ed. Jaffé, commencing, "O soror carissima."

[2] "Venerando Dei famulo . . . Bonifacio sive Wynfritho dignissimo Dei presbytero Bugga vilis vernacula, perpetuæ caritatis salutem. . . . Eo magis confiteor, quod nulla varietas temporalium vicissitudinum statum mentis meæ inclinare queat. . . . Sed ardentius vis amoris in me calescit, dum pro certo cognosco. . . . Et tu, mi carissimus (*sic*), dirige meæ parvitati ad consolationem, quod per dulcissimas litteras tuas promisisti."—*Epist.* 16.

Boniface and the companions of his mission were not less affectionate and unreserved in their epistolary communications with their sisters in religion. He wrote to those whom he hoped to draw to his aid, and associate with himself in his apostolic work, as follows: "To my venerable, estimable, and dearest sisters, Leobgitha, Thekla, and Cynegilda, and to all the other sisters who dwell with you, and ought to be loved like you, in Jesus Christ, the salutations of an eternal affection. I conjure and enjoin you to continue to do what you have done in the past, and must do always—that is, pray God, who is the refuge of the poor and the hope of the humble, to deliver me from my necessities and temptations, I who am the last and least of all to whom the Church of Rome has intrusted the preaching of the Gospel. Implore for me the mercy of God that, at the day when the wolf comes, I may not fly like an hireling, but that I may follow the example of the Good Shepherd, and bravely defend the sheep and the lambs, that is to say, the Catholic Church with its sons and daughters, against heretics, schismatics, and hypocrites. On your side, in these evil days, be not imprudent. Seek with intelligence to know the will of God. Act manfully with the strength given you by faith, but do all with charity and patience. Remember the Apostles and Prophets who have suffered so much, and received an eternal recompense." [1]

A still more tender confidence seems to inspire him when he writes to the abbesses of the great English communities, and especially to Eadburga, who was to succeed St. Mildred in the government of the monastery founded by her mother upon the shore where St. Augustin landed.[2] He calls her "blessed virgin and beloved lady, accomplished mistress of

[1] "Venerandis et amandis carissimis sororibus . . . æterne caritatis salutem obsecro et præcipio quasi filiabus carissimis. . . . Quia ultimus et pessimus sum omnium legatorum."—*Ep.* 91.

[2] See above, p. 393. The Abbess Eadburga only died in 751, four years before St. Boniface. He corresponded with her as well as with the abbess of Barking before his departure for Germany.

the monastic rule."[1] He entreats her to pray for him while he is beaten about by all the storms which he must brave in the midst of heathens, false Christians, false priests, and licentious clerks.[2] "Do not be displeased that I always ask the same thing. I must ask often for that which I desire incessantly. My troubles are daily, and each day thus warns me to seek the spiritual consolations of my brethren and sisters."[3]

As his task becomes more laborious his heart has more and more occasion to pour itself forth to his old friend. "To my beloved sister, the Abbess Eadburga, long interwoven with my soul by the ties of spiritual relationship. To my sister Eadburga, whom I clasp with the golden links of spiritual love, and whom I embrace with the divine and virgin kiss of charity, Boniface, bishop, legate of the Roman Church, servant of the servants of God. . . . Know that for my sins' sake the course of my pilgrimage is through storms; suffering and sadness are everywhere around me; and the saddest of all is the snare laid by false brethren, which is worse than the malice of the unbelievers. Pray, then, to the Lamb of God, the only defender of my life, to protect me amidst all these wolves. . . . Pray, also, for these heathens who have been intrusted to us by the Apostolic See, that God, who desires all men to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth, may deign to wrest them from idolatry and add them to our mother the Catholic Church. May the eternal rewarder of every good action make thee to triumph for ever in the glorious company of angels, my beloved sister, who by sending a copy of the

[1] "Beatissimæ virgini immo dilectissimæ dominæ Eadburge, monasticæ normulæ conversationis emeritæ."—*Ep.* 10.

[2] Epist. 87, ed. Jaffé; 27, ed. Serrarius. The latter concludes, from certain passages, that this letter must have been addressed to Eadburga, although it bears no name, and says simply: "Reverendissimæ ac dilectissimæ ancillæ Christi N."

[3] "Rogo ut non indignemini . . . quia cotidiana tribulatio divina solamina fratrum ac sororum me quærere admonet."—*Ep.* 87, ed. Jaffé.

Holy Scriptures has consoled the poor exile in Germany. The man who has to penetrate into the darkest corners of these nations cannot but fall into the snares of death, if he has not the word of God to light his steps. Pray, pray always, that He who from the highest heaven looks upon all that is humblest here below, may pardon me my sins, and grant to me when I open my mouth the eloquence that is needed to make the Gospel of the glory of Christ run and shine like a flame among the heathen nations." [1]

He wrote with not less effusion and tenderness to the Abbess Bugga,[2] who, overwhelmed with trials in the government of her double monastery, had sought comfort from him, and who was anxious to complete her life by a pilgrimage to Rome. "To my beloved lady, the sister whom I love in the love of Christ, more than all other women, the humble Boniface, unworthy bishop. . . . Ah, dearest sister, since the fear of God and the love of travel have put between us so many lands and seas, I have learned from many what storms of trouble have assailed your old age. I am deeply grieved .to hear it, and lament that, after having put aside the chief cares of the government of your

[1] "Dilectissimæ sorori et jamdudum spiritalis clientelæ propinquitate connexæ. . . . Aureo spiritalis amoris vinculo amplectendæ et divino ac virgineo caritatis osculo stringendo sorori Eadburgæ abbatissæ. . . . Undique labor, undique mœror. . . . Carissimam sororem remunerator æternus . . . lætificet . . . quæ, sanctorum librorum munera transmittendo, exulem Germanicum . . . consolata est. . . . Qui tenebrosos angulos Germanicarum gentium lustrare debet."—*Epist.* 73, 75, ed. Jaffé. "Ut præstet mihi verbum in apertione oris mei" (*Ephes.* vi. 19); "ut currat et clarificetur inter gentes Evangelium gloriæ Christi" (*2 Thessal.* iii. 1).

[2] This Bugga was also called Eadburga. Could she be, as has been often supposed, the *Heaburg cognomento Bugga* who figures in the title of Epistle 14 ed. Jaffé, 38 ed. Serrarius, 30 ed. Giles? Nothing, it appears to us, can be more doubtful, but we have neither time nor power to discuss a question in itself so unimportant. The Anglo-Saxon custom of having two names, which we have already met with in the cases of Domneva or Ermenberga, foundress of Minster, and Winefrid or Boniface, &c., adds to the difficulty and confusion, sometimes completely inextricable, of all researches into the history of the early Anglo-Saxon Church.

monasteries, out of love for a life of contemplation, you should have met with crosses still more frequent and more painful. I write thus, venerable sister, full of compassion for your griefs, and full also of the recollections of your kindness and of our ancient friendship, to exhort and console you as a brother. . . . I would that you were always joyful and happy in that hope of which the Apostle speaks, which is born of trial and never deceives. I would that you should despise with all your strength these worldly troubles, as the soldiers of Christ of both sexes have always despised them. . . . In the spring-time of your youth, the father and lover of your chaste virginity called you to him with the irresistible accent of fatherly love; and it is He who, now that you are old, would increase the beauty of your soul by so many labours and trials. Meet, then, dearest friend, the sufferings of heart and body with the buckler of faith and patience, that you may complete in your beautiful old age the work commenced in the flower of your youth. At the same time, I entreat you, remember your ancient promise, and do not cease to pray the Lord that He may deliver my soul from all peril. . . . Farewell, and be sure that the faith which we have sworn to each other will never fail."[1]

[1] "O soror carissima, postquam nos timor Christi et amor peregrinationis longa et lata terrarum ac maris intercapedine separavit. . . . Nunc autem . . . beneficiorum tuorum et antiquarum amicitiarum memor."—*Epist.* 86, ed. Jaffé. "Quia omnes milites Christi utriusque sexus tempestates et tribulationes infirmitatesque hujus sæculi despexerunt. . . . Qui pater et amator castæ virginitatis tuæ, qui te primevo tempore juventutis tuæ. . . . Ut quod in bona juventute cœpisti, in senectute bella ad gloriam Dei perficias. . . . Dominæ dilectissimæ et in amore Christi omnibus cæteris feminini sexus præferendæ sorori. . . . Bonifacius exiguus. . . . Fidem antiquam inter nos nunquam deficere scias."—*Epist.* 86, 88, ed. Jaffé.

This Abbess Bugga, who must not be confounded with the one quoted above, survived Boniface; she is mentioned as *honorabilis abbatissa* in a letter of the Archbishop of Canterbury to the successor of Boniface (*Ep.* 113, ed. Jaffé). She is probably the same who made a pilgrimage to Rome, and who will be spoken of further on.

As to the project of the pilgrimage to Rome, he will not pronounce either for or against it, but he begs her to wait the advice sent to her from Rome by their common friend, an abbess named Wethburga, who had gone there to seek that peace of contemplative life for which Bugga sighed, but had found only storms, rebellions, and the threat of a Saracenic invasion.[1]

The Anglo-Saxon monks who had accompanied the future martyr in his apostolic mission, rivalled their chief in the warmth of their expressions in their letters to their cloistered sisters. Lullius, who was to replace Boniface in the archiepiscopal see of Mayence, wrote, along with two of his companions, to the Abbess Cuneburga, a daughter of one of the Anglo-Saxon dynasties, telling her that she occupied the first place above all other women in the innermost sanctuary of their hearts.[2] The same Lullius wrote to the Abbess Eadburga, who was so dear to his master, begging her not to refuse him the sweetness of receiving letters from her, and to assure her that the spiritual brotherhood which united them made him capable of doing anything to please her.[3] There still remains to be quoted a letter from an anonymous monk to a nun equally unknown, which has had the honour of being preserved through all these ages, along with the letters of St. Boniface; a fact at which we rejoice, for it throws a pleasing light upon the tender and simple emotions which filled those honest, humble, and fervent hearts by whom Germany was won to the faith of Jesus Christ:—"N., unworthy of a truly close affection, to N., greeting and happiness in the Lord: Beloved sister, though the vast extent

[1] *Epist.* 88, ed. Jaffé.

[2] "Dominæ dilectissimæ Christique religiosissimæ abbatissæ, regalis prosapiæ generositate præditæ. . . . Agnoscere cupimus almitatis tuæ clementiam, quia te præ cæteris cunctis feminini sexus in cordis cubiculo cingimus amore."—*Epist.* 41, ed. Jaffé.

[3] "Et si quid mihi . . . imperare volueris, scit caritas ille quæ inter nos est copulata spiritali germanitate, id meam parvitatem totis nisibus implere velle. Interea rogo ut mihi litteras tuæ dulcedinis destinare non deneges."—*Epist.* 75, ed. Jaffé.

of the seas separate us a little, I am daily your neighbour in my memory. I entreat you not to forget the words that we have exchanged, and what we promised each other the day of my departure. I salute you, dearest; live long, live happy, praying for me. I write you these lines not to impose my wishes arrogantly upon you, but humbly to ask for yours, as if you were my own sister, did I possess one."[1]

Tender and confidential as was the tone of the letters which arrived from Germany in the Anglo-Saxon cloisters, there seems to be something still more warm and intimate in the fragments which remain to us of those which were written in the cells of Winbourne, Minster, and many other monasteries, and which were sent from thence whenever a sure messenger presented himself, along with presents of books, vestments, spices, sacred linen, &c., to the monks engaged beyond the sea in the great work of the Teutonic missions.

One continually apparent feature in them, which we have already remarked, is an eager and unconquerable desire to travel, to go to Rome, notwithstanding the numerous and formidable obstacles which stood in the way of the pilgrimage, and the dangers of every kind to which women were

[1] "Intimæ dilectionis amore quamvis indignus. . . . Amantissima soror, licet longuscula alta marium æqualitate distam. . . . Sis memor, carissima, verborum nostrorum, quæ pariter pepigimus, quando profectus fueram. . . . Vale, vivens ævo longiore et vita feliciore, interpellans pro me. Hæc pauca ad te scripsi, non arroganter mea commendans, sed humiliter tua deposcens seu . . . propriæ germanæ nuper nanctæ. Vale." —*Epist.* 139, ed. Jaffé. This interesting production is unfortunately followed by an effusion in Latin verse much less admirable :—

> "Vale, Christi virguncula, Christi nempe tiruncula,
> Mihi cara magnopere atque gnara in opere," &c.

Cf. 96 and 97 of the same collection. Let us add that the same simple and tender familiarity between monks and nuns is found, five centuries after our Anglo-Saxons, in the interesting collection of letters from B. Jourdain de Saxe, second general of the Dominicans, to the nuns of St. Agnes of Bologne and to the B. Diana, their foundress, recently published by Père Bayonne, Paris and Lyons, Bauchu, 1865.

exposed in undertaking it—dangers which Boniface and his companions had energetically pointed out. The last trace which remains to us of the exemplary activity of the illustrious Elfleda, abbess of Whitby, who died in 714, after sixty years of monastic life, is a letter of recommendation addressed to the daughter of the king of Austrasia, who was abbess of a monastery near Treves, in favour of an English nun, whom she calls her daughter, as she had educated her from her youth; she had detained her as long as she could for the good of souls, but at last had permitted her to satisfy her ardent desire of visiting the tombs of St. Peter and St. Paul.[1] One of the chief friends of St. Boniface, the Abbess Bugga, who must not be confounded with her whom we have just mentioned, had not only the strength and privilege of accomplishing that journey, but also the happiness of meeting him at Rome, from whence she returned safe to resume the government of her community.[2]

A third Bugga, who is also called Eadburga, eagerly entertained the same desire, and expressed it in a long letter written to Boniface, jointly with her mother Eangytha, who was abbess of the monastery in which both lived. What was this monastery? Its situation is not ascertained, but it is probable that it was either Whitby or Hartlepool, or some other house situated on the rocks which overlook the Northern Sea: so entirely do the images employed both by the mother and daughter reveal a life accustomed to the emotions of a seashore. Both of them, while consulting him on their project, open their heart to him, and tell him of their trials; and through their abrupt and incoherent style and faulty Latin thus afford us a glimpse of the agitations and miseries which too often trouble the peace and light of the cloister. "Loving brother," they write, "brother

[1] *Epist.* 8, ed. Jaffé.

[2] See the curious and interesting letter of Ethelbert II., king of Kent, to Boniface, to which we shall return later (*Epist.* 103, ed. Jaffé; 73, ed. Giles). It will there be seen that this Bugga was of the race of the Ascings: "Utpote consanguinitate propinquitatis nostræ admonita."

in the spirit rather than in the flesh, and enriched by the gifts of the Spirit, in these pages, which you see bathed by our tears, we come to confide to you alone, and with God alone for a witness, that we are overwhelmed by the troubles accumulated upon us, and by the tumult of secular affairs. When the foaming and stormy waves of the sea break against the rocks on the shore, when the breath of the furious winds has roused the breadth of ocean, as the keel of the boats is seen in the air, and the masts under water, so the boat of our souls is driven about by a whirlwind of griefs and calamities. We are in the house which is spoken of in the Gospel: "The rain descended, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house" (Matt. vii. 25, 27). What afflicts us above all is the recollection of our innumerable sins, and the absence of any really complete good work. And besides the care of our own souls, we must bear, which is harder still, that of all the souls of every age and of both sexes which have been confided to us, and of which we must render an account before the judgment-seat of Christ, not only of their actions, but also of their thoughts, which are known to God alone! To which must be added the daily toil of our domestic affairs, the discussion of all the quarrels which the enemy of every good takes pleasure in sowing among men in general, and especially among monks and in monasteries. And besides, we are tormented by our poverty, by the small size of our cultivated lands, and more still by the enmity of the king, who listens to all the accusations made against us by the envious; by the taxes laid on us for the service of the king, his queen, the bishop, the earl, and their satellites and servants,—things which would take too much space to enumerate, and are more easily imagined than described. To all these distresses must be added the loss of our friends and relations, who formed almost a tribe, and of whom none remain. We have neither son, brother, father, nor uncle: we have no more than an only daughter, deprived of everything she loved in the world except her

mother, who is very old, and a son of her brother, who is also unfortunate, though without any fault of his, because the king hates our family. There remains, therefore, not one person in whom we can put our trust. God has taken all from us by different means. Some are dead in their country, and wait in their dark graves the day of the resurrection and the last judgment, the day when envy shall be overcome and consumed, and all mourning and pain shall disappear from the presence of the elect. Others have left their native shore to confide themselves to the plains of ocean, and to visit the tombs of the apostles and martyrs. For all these reasons, and for others which could not be told in a day, not even one of the long days of July or August, our life is a burden to us.

"Every being that is unhappy, and has lost confidence in himself, seeks a faithful friend to whom he can open his heart and pour forth all its secrets. Ah! how true is what they say, that nothing can be sweeter than to have some one to whom we can speak of everything as to ourselves! Now, we have sought for that faithful friend in whom we could have more confidence than in ourselves; who should regard our pains and distresses as his own; who should pity all our evils, and console them by his salutary counsels. Yes, we have sought him long. And at last we hope to have found in you this friend whom we have so long desired and eagerly hoped for.

"Oh that God would deign to carry us in the arms of His angel, as He did of old the prophet Habakkuk and the deacon Philip, into the far countries where you travel, and make us to hear the living word from your mouth, which would be sweeter to us than honey! But, since we do not deserve this, and that we are separated by land and sea, we will nevertheless use our confidence in you, brother Boniface, to tell you that for a long time we have desired, like so many of our kinsmen and friends, to visit that Rome which was once mistress of the world, to obtain the pardon

of our sins. I, above all, Eangytha, who am old, and consequently have more sins than others, I have this desire. I confided my plan formerly to Wala, who was then my abbess and spiritual mother, and to my daughter, who was then very young. But we know that there are many who disapprove our intention, because the canons enjoin that each should remain where she has made her vow, and give account of that vow to God. Troubled by this doubt, we pray you, both of us, to be our Aaron, and to present our prayers to God, that by your mediation He may show us what will be most useful for us—to remain at home, or to go on this holy pilgrimage. We entreat you to answer what we have written to you in a style so rustic and unpolished. We have no trust in those who glorify themselves in the sight of man, but we have much trust in your faith and charity to God and your neighbours. . . . Farewell, spiritual brother, faithful, amiable, and beloved with a pure and sincere love. . . . A friend is long sought, rarely found, and still more rarely preserved. Farewell; pray that our sins may not bring us misfortune." [1]

[1] "Amantissime frater, spiritalis magis quam carnalis, et spiritalium gratiarum munificentia magnificatus, tibi soli indicare voluimus et Deus solus testis est nobis, quas cernis interlitas lacrymis. . . . Tanquam spumosi maris vortices verrunt et vellunt undarum cumulos, conlisos saxis, quando ventorum violentia et procellarum tempestates sævissime enormum euripum impellunt et cymbarum carinæ sursum immutate et malus navis deorsum duratur, haut secus animarum nostrarum naviculæ. . . . Quas seminat omnium bonorum invisor; qui . . . inter omnes homines spargit, maxime per monasticos et monachorum contubernia. . . . Angit præterea paupertas et penuria rerum temporalium et angustia cespitis ruris nostris; et infestatio regalis. . . . Et ut dicitur, quid dulcius est quam habeas illum cum quo omnia possis loqui ut tecum? . . . Diu quæsivimus. Et confidimus quia invenimus in te illum amicum, quem cupivimus, et optavimus et speravimus. . . . Vale, frater spiritalis fidelissime atque amantissime et sincera et pura dilectione dilecte; . . . Amicus diu quæritur, vix invenitur, difficile servatur."—*Epist.* 14, ed. Jaffé. We have already quoted a letter in which Boniface replies to an Abbess Bugga on the subject of a pilgrimage to Rome (*Epist.* 88, ed. Jaffé). I do not think that this reply belongs to the letter I am about to quote, because it says nothing of the mother Eangytha, and because

Let us now turn to the beautiful and learned Lioba (*die Liebe*, the beloved), and observe the means she took while still very young, from her convent at Winbourne, to make herself known to the great man who afterwards called her to his aid to introduce the light of the Gospel and monastic life among the German nations:—

"To the very reverend lord and bishop, Boniface, beloved in Christ, his kinswoman Leobgytha,[1] the last of the servants of God, health and eternal salvation. I pray your clemency to deign to recollect the friendship which united you to my father Tinne, an inhabitant of Wessex, who departed from this world eight years ago, that you may pray for the repose of his soul. I also recommend to you my mother Ebba, your kinswoman, as you know better than me, who still lives in great suffering, and has been for long overwhelmed with her infirmities. I am their only daughter; and God grant, unworthy as I am, that I might have the honour of having you for my brother, for no man of our kindred inspires me with the same confidence as you do. I have taken care to send you this little present, not that I think it worthy your attention, but that you may remember my humbleness, and that, notwithstanding the distance of our dwellings, the tie of true love may unite us for the rest of our days. Excellent brother, what I ask you with earnestness is, that the buckler of your prayers may defend me from the poisoned arrows of the enemy. I beg of you also to excuse the rusticity of this letter, and that your courtesy will not refuse the few words of answer which I so much desire. You will find below some lines which I have attempted to compose according to the rules of poetic art, not from self-confidence, but to exercise the

it is filled with various subjects of which there is no question in the letter of the mother and daughter.

[1] She had also two names in Anglo-Saxon, Truthgeba and Leobgytha; but she received the surname of Lioba or Lieba, under which she is generally known, because, according to her biographer, she was beloved by everyone.—ZELL, *op. cit.*, p. 262.

mind which God has given me, and to ask your counsel. I have learned all that I know from Eadburga,[1] my mistress, who gives herself to profound study of the divine law. Farewell: live a long and happy life; intercede for me.

> "May the Almighty Judge, who made the earth,
> And glorious in His Father's kingdom reigns,
> Preserve your chaste fire warm as at its birth,
> Till time for you shall lose its rights and pains."[2]

Beside the celebrated Liobe, let us quote an unknown nun, who calls herself Cena the Unworthy—*Pontifici Bonifacio Christi amatori Cene indigna*—but who writes to the great apostle with a proud and original simplicity which goes to my heart, and which I thank the ancient compilers for having preserved along with the letters of the great apostle. "I confess, my dearest," she says, "that, seeing you too seldom with the eyes of my body, I cease not to look at you with the eyes of my heart. . . . And this I declare, that to the end of my life I shall always recollect you in my prayers. I entreat you, by our affection and our mutual faith, to be faithful to my littleness, as I shall be faithful to your greatness, and to help me by your prayers, that the Almighty may dispose of my life according to His will. If one of your people ever comes to this land, let him not disdain to have recourse to my poverty; and if I can render any service, either spiritual or temporal, to you or to others, I will do it with all my might, to the great profit of my soul."[3]

[1] This, then, is a third Eadburga, who was mistress of the novices at Winbourne, and must not be confounded either with Eadburga, abbess of Thanet, or with Eadburga, surnamed Bugga, both of whom appear in St. Boniface's correspondence.

[2] I reprint the translation from the excellent work of Ozanam, *La Civilisation Chrétienne chez les Francs*, p. 226, from which I shall have many other quotations to make if I am enabled to continue my work, and to relate the conquest of Germany by the Anglo-Saxon monks.

[3] "Jam fateor tibi, carissime . . . et hoc tibi notum facio, quod usque

This letter was addressed to Boniface, then a bishop, very probably by one of those whom he had transplanted from England into Germany.

Let us now listen to another Anglo-Saxon maid, a contemporary of his youth, Egburga, whom some suppose to have been that daughter of an East Anglian king who was the abbess and friend of St. Guthlac.[1] She wrote to Boniface while he was still abbot of an English monastery, to confide to him her private griefs—"To the holy abbot and true friend, Winifred, full of knowledge and religion, Egburga, the last of his pupils, eternal greeting in the Lord. Since I have known the blessing of your affection, it has remained in my soul like an odour of incomparable sweetness. And though I may be henceforward deprived of your temporal presence, I do not cease to embrace you as a sister. You were already my kind brother; you are now my father. Since death, bitter and cruel, has snatched from me my brother Oshere, whom I loved more than anybody in the world, I prefer you to all other men. Neither night nor day passes that I do not recall your lessons. Believe me, for God is my witness, I love you with a supreme love. I am sure that you will never forget the friendship which united you to my brother. I am good for very little, and much inferior to him in worth and in knowledge; but I yield nothing to him in my affection for you. Time has passed since then; but the heavy cloud of sorrow has never left me. On the contrary, the longer I live the more I suffer. I have proved the truth of what is written, that the love of man brings grief, but the love of Christ lights the heart. My heart has received a new wound by the loss of my dearest sister Wethburga. She has suddenly disappeared from my side—she with whom I grew up, who has sucked the same milk, as I call Jesus to witness."

ad finem vitæ meæ te semper in meis orationibus recordor, et te rogo per creditam amicitiam ut meæ parvitati fidelis sis, sicut in te credo."—*Epist.* 94, ed. Jaffé.

[1] See p. 287 of this volume.

Here the poor nun, no doubt desiring to show to her ancient master that she was not unworthy of his lessons, proceeds to quote Virgil:—

"Crudelis ubique
Luctus, ubique pavor, et plurima mortis imago."[1]

But she quotes wrongly without perceiving it, as has been the case with two or three terrible solecisms which occur in the preceding part of her letter.[2] After which she continues:—

"I should have wished to die had God permitted it. But it is not cruel death, it is a separation still more cruel which has withdrawn us from each other; she to happiness, as I believe, but I to misfortune, since she has left me as a sort of pledge to the service of the world, while she whom I love so much is now shut up, according to what I hear, in I know not what prison in Rome.[3] But the love of Christ which blossoms in her heart is stronger than all bonds. She will ascend the strait and narrow way, but I am left lying in the depths, enchained by the law of the flesh. In the day of judgment she will sing joyously with the Lord, 'I was in prison, and thou visitedst me.' You

[1] *Æneid*, ii. 369, 370.

[2] "Ego autem licet scentia *tardiora* et meritis *viliora* illo sim, tamen erga tuæ caritatis obsequium dispar non sum." I shall perhaps be reproached for lingering over these minutiæ. Let it be so; all that relates to the history of the soul, especially in the cradle of the faith, attracts me irresistibly. What is more touching than these imperfections of style in a classic tongue from the pen of a half-civilised woman, who at all risks must express to the heart of a friend the emotions which fill her own?

[3] "Me vero infelicem, quasi quoddam depositum, huic sæculo servire permisit, sciens enim quantum illam dilexi, quantum amavi, quam nunc, ut audio, Romana carcer includit."—*Epist.* 13. The anonymous author of *Notes on St. Hilda and St. Bega* concludes from this passage that Egburga had succeeded her sister Wethburga as abbess, and that it is the latter who is alluded to in the letter to St. Boniface as being already fixed at Rome. This conjecture appears probable enough. The two sisters, with an elder one, all three daughters of a king of East Anglia, would thus have been successively abbesses of Hackness. See genealogical table D.

too, in that day, will sit where the twelve apostles sit, and will be proud, like a glorious chief, of having led before the tribunal of the eternal King so many souls won by your labours. But I in this valley of tears weep for my sins, which have made me unworthy of such company.

"For this reason the seaman, beaten by the tempest, does not long to enter the port, nor do the parched fields thirst for rain, nor the mother wandering along the winding shore in the agonies of suspense await her son, with more anxiety than that I feel in my desire once more to enjoy your presence. My sins prevent it, and I am in despair. But, sinner as I am, prostrated at your feet, I implore you from the bottom of my heart—I cry to you from the ends of the earth—O blessed lord, that you will carry me to the height of the rock of your prayers, for you are my hope and my citadel against the enemy visible and invisible. To console my great grief, to calm the waves of my trouble, to give some support to my weakness, send me help, either in the form of holy relics or at least by words from your hand, however short, that I may always look at them as at yourself."[1]

Thus we see how warm still were the natural affections in these impetuous hearts, without wronging the new bonds of friendship and fraternity which religious life, with its active and extended connections in the spiritual order,

[1] "Abbate (*sic*) sancto veroque amico . . . Wynfrido Egburg ultima discipulorum seu discipularum tuarum. . . . Caritatis tuæ copulam fateor; ast dum per interiorem hominem gustavi, quasi quiddam mellitæ suavitatis meis visceribus hic sapor insidet. Et licet interim . . . ab aspectu corporali visualiter defraudata sim, sororis tamen semper amplexibus collum tuum constrinxero. . . . Crede mihi, Deo teste, quia summo te complector amore. . . . Sed . . . ut scriptum est: *Amor hominis deducit dolorem, amor autem Christi illuminat cor.* . . . Non sic tempestate jactatus nauta portum desiderat, non sic sitientia imbres arva desiderant, non sic curvo litore anxia filium mater expectat, quam ut ego visibus vestris fruere cupio. . . . Vel paucula saltim per scripta beatitudinis tuæ verba, ut in illis tuam præsentiam semper habeam."—*Epist.* 13.

developed in them. The invaluable collection of the Epistles of St. Boniface enclose several letters from Anglo-Saxon nuns to their brothers, always in Latin, and in very unclassical Latin, but all bearing the marks of tender and sincere affection. "To my only and beloved brother," writes one of these, who describes herself as the least of the servants of Christ. "How, dearest brother, can you make me wait for your coming so long? Do you never think that I am alone in the world? that no other brother, no other relation, comes to see me? You do this, perhaps, because I have not been able to do all I wished for your service; but how can you so forget the rights of charity and kindred? Oh, my brother, my dear brother, why do you thus by your absence fill with sadness my days and nights? Do you not know that no other living soul is more dear to me than you are? I cannot say in writing all that I would; and, besides, I feel that you have ceased to care for your poor little sister." [1]

The name of the writer of these words is unknown; and the name, but nothing more, is known of another nun whose only brother was among the companions of Boniface. She would not be comforted for his absence, and poured out her sadness in writing to her brother with a poetic and pathetic voice which recalls the wail of St. Radegund, two centuries earlier, in her convent at Poitiers, when thinking of the troubles of her youth.[2] Our Anglo-Saxon nun also

[1] "Fratri unico atque amantissimo . . . N. H., ultima ancillarum Dei. . . . Quare non vis cogitare quod ego sola in hac terra? . . . O frater, o frater mi, cur potes mentem parvitatis meæ assidue mœrore, fletu atque tristitia die noctuque caritatis tuæ absentia affligere? . . . Jam certum teneo, quod tibi cura non est de mea parvitate."—*Epist.* 144, ed. Jaffé.

[2] See vol. ii. p. 175. M. Zell believes this Bertgytha to be the same as the nun of that name who accompanied Lioba to Germany, and that it is from thence she writes to her brother; but this supposition is irreconcilable with the text of the letters, where it is said that the sister had been abandoned very young by her parents, while the only historian who speaks of the companions of Lioba says that Berohtgyd went to Germany with her mother, and that both became abbesses in Thuringia.—OTHLO, *Vita*

attempted to interpret in Latin verse the sorrows of her heart. But her verses are far from having the merit of those which Fortunatus placed at the service of the abbess-queen of St. Croix. Her prose is at once more correct and more touching. "To Balthard, my only brother, loved in the Lord, and more loved than any one in the world. . . . I have received with tender gratitude the message and gifts which you have sent me by your faithful messenger Aldred. I will do, with the help of God, everything you tell me, but on the condition that you will come back and see me. I cannot exhaust the fountain of my tears when I see or hear that others meet their friends again. Then I recall that I was forsaken in my youth by my parents, and left alone here. Nevertheless I have not been forsaken by God, and I bless His almighty mercy that He has preserved your life as well as mine. And now, dearest brother, I implore and beseech you, deliver my soul from this sadness, which is very hurtful to me. I declare to you that even if you only stayed with me one day and left me the next, grief would vanish from my heart. But if it is disagreeable to you to grant my request, I take God to witness that never at least shall our tenderness be betrayed by me. Perhaps you would prefer that I should go to you instead of awaiting you here. For myself, I should willingly go where the bodies of our parents rest, to end my life, and to rise from that spot to the country of those beings whose peace and joy are eternal. . . . Farewell, dear servant of the cross, beloved of your sister; keep your good fame for ever."

On other occasions she writes again: "My soul is weary of life, because of my love for you. I am here alone, forsaken, deprived of all kindred. My father and my mother

S. Bonifacii, ed. Jaffé, p. 490. The messenger who bore the correspondence between the brother and sister was Aldred or Aldraed, who carried from Germany to England the messages of the deacon Lullius, the chief assistant of Boniface (*Epist.* 78), from which it has been supposed that the brother of Berchtgyd might have been employed on the same mission.

have forsaken me, but the Lord hath taken me up. Between you and me there is that gulf of great waters of which Scripture speaks; but we are united by love, for true love is never overcome, neither by space nor time. At the same time I acknowledge that I am always sad. My soul is troubled even in sleep, for love is strong as death. Now I beseech you, my beloved brother, come to me, or let me go to you, that I may see you again before I die, for the love of you will never leave my heart. My brother, your only sister greets you in Christ. I pray for you as for myself day and night—every hour and every minute. . . . I pray weeping and stretched on the earth, that you may live happy here below, and that you may become a saint."[1]

I pity those who, either from sceptical contempt for all religious tradition, or modern rigorism, can listen with indifference or contempt to the cries of love and grief which sprang more than a thousand years ago from the depth of those Anglo-Saxon cloisters, and which attest, before and after so many other witnesses, the immortal vitality of the affections and wants of the human heart, in all climates and all forms of society. What can be more touching than these outbursts of human tenderness amid the rude kindred of the Anglo-Saxons, and under the rugged bark of their wild nature? What more interesting

[1] "Dilectissimo fratri in Domino et in carne carissimo Balthardo Berthgyth. . . . Et nunc, frater mi, adjuro te atque deprecor, ut auferas tristitiam ab anima mea: quia valde nocet mihi. . . . Sin autem displicet tibi implere petitionem meam, tunc Deum testem invoco, quod in me nunquam fit derelicta dilectio nostra. . . .

"Have, crucicola care, salutate a sorore;
Fine tenus feliciter famam serva simpliciter. . . .

"Tædet animam meam vitæ meæ propter amorem fraternitatis nostræ. . . . Multæ sunt aquarum congregationes inter me et te. . . . Tamen caritate jungamur; quia vera caritas nunquam locorum limite frangitur. . . . Neque per somnium mente quiesco.

"Vale vivens feliciter ut sis sanctus simpliciter. . . . Precibus peto profusis fletibus; solo tenus sæpissima."—*Epist.* 148, 149, ed. Jaffé.

than the effort of these souls to interpret, in a language which they supposed more cultivated than their own, the emotions which moved them, and, above all, to renew themselves continually in the truths and precepts of the Christian faith, which had for so short a time taken the place of the worship of their fathers among them! For my own part, I listen, across past centuries, to these yearnings of the heart, to these voices of the soul, with interest a thousand times greater than to the victories and conquests which have absorbed the attention of historians; and I offer up my heartfelt thanksgivings to the biographers of the saints and the editors of their works for having infolded in their volumes, like flowers in an herbal, these early traces of human love and the storms that assail it.

"It would be singular," says the austere and tender Lacordaire, "if Christianity, founded on the love of God and men, should end in withering up the soul in respect to everything which was not God. . . . Self-denial, far from diminishing love, nourishes and increases it. The ruin of love is self-love, not the love of God; and no one ever met on earth with affections stronger and purer, more ardent, more tender, and more lasting than those to which the saints gave up their hearts, at once emptied of themselves and filled with God."[1]

VI

But the storms of the heart, like the storms of life, have an end, which is death—that death which delivers from everything—which crowns and sometimes explains everything. How did our Anglo-Saxon nuns die? As far as we can make out, they died happy and even joyous, without contradicting or giving up the tender affections which had agitated their hearts and animated their life. It would be

[1] LACORDAIRE, *Lettres à des Jeunes Gens.* Toulouse, Nov. 9, 1852.

a mistake to suppose that they only, or that even they the first, among the monastic classes of old, kept up those beautiful and holy friendships to their last days. St. Gregory the Great has preserved to us the recollection of the noble Roman, Galla, daughter of the patrician Symmachus, who became a nun in a monastery near the Basilica of St. Peter, and being attacked by a fatal illness had a vision three days before her death. The prince of the apostles appeared to her in a dream and announced to her that her sins were pardoned. She would not content herself with that supreme grace, but ventured to ask from her holy protector that another nun, Sister Benedicta, whom she loved most in the community, might die with her. The apostle answered that her friend should not die at the same time, but should follow her in thirty days. The next morning Galla told the superior what she had seen and heard, and everything happened as she said. The two friends at the end of a month were united by death.[1]

The great Abbess Hilda, of whom we have spoken so much, and who was for thirty years the light and oracle of Northumberland, had also in her community a favourite nun, or one, at least, who loved her, says Bede, with a great love. This nun had not the happiness of dying at the same time as her friend. But when the holy abbess, who had been consumed for seven years by a cruel fever, which did not for a single day interrupt the exercise of her spiritual maternity, came at last to the end of her trials—when she had given up her last breath in the midst of her daughters collected round her bed to hear the last exhortation, in which she besought them to keep the peace of the Gospel between them and all men,—her friend, who was at that

[1] "Gothorum temporibus, hujus urbis nobilissima puella. . . . Ex amore sumens audaciam . . . quia quamdam sanctimonialem feminam in eodem monasterio præ cæteris diligebat . . . subjunxit: Rogo ut soror Benedicta mecum veniat. Cui ille respondit: Non, sed illa talis veniat tecum: hæc vero, quam petis, die erit trigesimo secutura."—S. GREGOR., *Dial.*, l. IV., ap. *Brev. Roman. Off. Propr. Cler. Rom.* die 5 Oct.

moment detained in the novitiate, in a distant corner of the monastic lands, had the consolation of seeing in a dream the soul of Hilda led to heaven by a shining train of angels.[1]

Læta mortem vidit: she saw death with joy. These words, spoken by Bede of St. Hilda, seem to have been applicable to all the female saints, and even to all the nuns whose recollection he has preserved to us. There was one at Barking, who, after having been for long the humble and zealous assistant of the first abbess, Ethelburga, was warned of the death of that abbess, her friend, by a vision, in which she saw her dear Ethelburga wrapt in a shroud which shone like the sun, and raised to heaven by golden chains which represented her good works. Deprived of her spiritual mother, she lived for nine years in the most cruel sufferings, in order, says Bede, that the furnace of this daily tribulation might consume all the imperfection that remained among so many virtues. At last paralysis assailed all her members, and even her tongue. Three days before her death she recovered sight and speech: she was heard to exchange some words with an invisible visitor. It was her dearest Ethelburga, who came to announce to her her deliverance. "I can scarcely bear this joy," said the sick woman; and the following night, freed at once from sickness and from the bondage of the flesh, she entered into everlasting joy.[2]

[1] "In quo toto tempore nunquam . . . commissum sibi gregem et publice et privatim docere prætermittebat. . . . Septimo infirmitatis anno . . . circa galli cantum, percepto viatico sacrosanctæ communionis, cum accersitis ancillis Christi . . . de servanda eas invicem, immo cum omnibus pace evangelica admoneret inter verba exhortationis læta mortem vidit. . . . Nunciavit matrem illarum omnium Hild abbatissam . . . se aspectante cum luce immensa ducibus angelis ad æternæ lumina lucis . . . ascendisse. . . . Ferunt quod eadem nocte . . . cuidam virginum Deo devotarum quæ illam immenso amore diligebat, obitus illus in visione apparuerit."—BEDE, iv. 23.

[2] "Christi famula Torchtgyd . . . adjutrix disciplinæ regularis eidem matri, minores docendo vel castigando curabat. . . . Vidit quasi corpus

A monument which is called the Maidens' Tomb is still shown in the fine church of Beverley; it is the grave of two daughters of an earl, a benefactor of the great abbey of St. John, who had taken the veil there. On Christmas night, according to the legend, they were the last to leave the midnight mass, and did not reappear in their stalls. After the service of the following night, the abbess, made anxious by their absence, went to look for them, and found them asleep in each other's arms. When they woke it was found that they supposed themselves to have slept only an hour, and had dreamt of paradise. They went down to the choir, and there, kneeling before the abbess, after having asked and received her benediction, died, still embracing each other.[1]

One of the most celebrated heathens of our century, Goethe, died asking for light. "More light!" these were, it is said, his last words. They recur to the mind involuntarily, when we read of the happy and joyful death of these virgins, sweet and full of light, who prepared, in the depths of their cloisters now despised or forgotten, the conversion of the country of Goethe. Light above all, a heavenly and supernatural light, floods over their deathbeds and their tombs.

These visions full of light, and these happy deaths, seem to have been specially accorded to our Anglo-Saxons, and

hominis, quod esset sole clarius, sindone involutum in sublime ferri . . . quasi funibus auro clarioribus. . . . Per annos novem pia Redemptoris nostri provisione fatigata, ut quicquid in ea vitii sordidantis inter virtutes per ignorantiam vel incuriam resedisset, totum hoc cominus diutine tribulationis excoqueret. . . . *Nequaquam hæc læta ferre queo.* . . . Interrogata cum quo loqueretur: *Cum carissima*, inquit, *matre mea Ædilberge.* . . . Soluta carnis simul et infirmitatis vinculis, ad æternæ gaudia salutis intravit."—BEDE, iv. 9.

[1] Earl Puch, the father of these two sisters, is mentioned by Bede (v. 4), who describes the miraculous cure of his wife by St. John of Beverley. One of their daughters was named Yolfrida; the narrative states that she became a nun at Beverley, and died there in 742. "Puch dedit cum filia manerium de Walkington." Puch held the manor of South Burton, two miles from Beverley.—DUGDALE, *Monasticon*, i. 170; MABILLON, *Act. SS. O. S. B.*, vol. iii. p. 413.

not only to those who died upon their native soil, but also to those who had passed their lives in foreign cloisters. At Faremoutier, in France, the daughter of a king of Kent, Earcongotha, of whom we have already spoken,[1] had edified all the inhabitants by the miracles of her virtue. Being warned of her approaching end, she went from cell to cell in the infirmary of the monastery asking for the prayers of the sick nuns. She died during the following night at the first glimpse of dawn. At the same hour the monks who occupied another part of the double monastery heard a sound like the noise of a multitude, who to the sound of heavenly music invaded the monastery. When they went out to see what it was, they found themselves in a flood of miraculous light, in the midst of which the soul of the foreign princess ascended to heaven.[2]

In the same cloister at Faremoutier, where the daughter of the kings of Kent, the grandchild of Clovis and Ethelbert, thus lived and died, a humble lay-sister, also an Anglo-Saxon, had, like her royal companion, a joyous presentiment of her death, and a shining train of angels to escort her to heaven. One day when Willesinda (as she was called) worked in the garden of the monastery with the other lay-sisters, she said to them, "One of those who cultivate this spot is about to die; let us then be ready, that our tardiness may not injure us in eternity." They asked her in vain which one of them it should be. Soon after, she fell ill, and during all her sickness she looked up to heaven with eyes shining with happiness,

[1] See above, pp. 381 and 391.

[2] "Magnarum fuit virgo virtutum . . . Hujus multa ab incolis loci illius solent opera virtutum et signa miraculorum usque hodie narrari. . . . Cœpit circuire in monasterio casulas infirmarum Christi famularum. . . . Ipsa autem nocte . . . incipiente aurora . . . multi de fratribus . . . sonitum quasi plurimæ multitudinis monasterium ingredientis; mox egressi dignoscere quid esset, viderunt lucem cœlitus emissam fuisse permaximam, quæ sanctam illam animam . . . ad æterna gaudia ducebat. . . . Tantæ fragrantia suavitatis ab imis ebullivit, ut cunctis qui adstabant fratribus ac sororibus quasi opobalsami cellaria esse viderentur aperta."—BEDE, iii. 8.

repeating long passages from Holy Scripture, though she had never learned them by heart. Like the cowherd-poet whom the Abbess Hilda brought into monastic life and to a knowledge of the Bible, she astonished all present by repeating to them the Old and New Testament in their order.

After this she began to sing with wonderful sweetness the services as she had heard them sung by the priests. Then all at once she said to her amazed companions, "Room, room, for those who are coming!" No one was seen to enter, but conversation was heard, which the sick woman kept up, bowing her head with an expression of respect and joy. "Welcome, my dear ladies, welcome," she said. "To whom are you speaking?" they asked her. "What!" she answered, "do you not recognise your sisters who have left this community for heaven? Look, Anstrude, there is Ansilda, your own sister, who has been long dead. She is clothed with the white robe of the elect." After this she breathed her last, and the choir of angels was immediately heard coming forth to meet the saved soul.[1]

But it was especially among the learned ladies of Barking, in the monastery which had made so warm a response to the classical teachings of Aldhelm and Boniface, that death was sweet and radiant. During the great pestilence of 664, which so cruelly desolated the new-born Church of England,

[1] "Quædam ex genere Saxonum Willesinda nomine, . . . quadam die dum in hortum intra monasterii septa laboraret, cum sodalibus locuta est: Cito a nobis quæ in hac area excolimus una itura est. . . . Cœpit læta ad cœlum vultus referre, et ignotas sibi dudum scripturarum paginas enarrare, exorsaque a principio libros Moysis per ordinem recitare, Evangeliique vitalia sacramenta ac Apostolica post veterum documenta narrare. Omnesque deinceps scripturas ex ordine memorare. . . . Hilari vultu, capiteque inclinato dixit: Benedicite dominæ meæ, benedicite dominæ meæ. Inquirentesque quæ adstabant quibus salutem præmitteret, respondit: Non cernitis sorores vestras quæ de vestro collegio migraverunt ad cœlos? Quærentesque illæ si agnosceret, increpanti voce ad unam earum Ansitrudem nomine loquitur: Vel tu, inquit, non agnoscis sororem tuam Ansildem, quæ dudum ad cœlos migravit candidatarum choris insertam."—*Vita S. Burgundofaræ*, c. vii., ap. MABILLON, *Act. SS. O. S. B.* vol. ii. p. 425.

the nuns went out one night from their church, at the end of matins, to pray at the grave of the monks who had preceded them into the other world, when all at once they saw the entire sky lighted up and cover them all as with a radiant shroud. They were so terrified that the hymn they were singing died on their lips. This light, which was more brilliant than that of the sun, guided them to the burying-place in which they were themselves to rest, and then disappeared; and they understood that it showed them at once the heaven which awaited their souls, and the spot of earth in which their bodies were to await the day of resurrection.[1]

Among those who died in so great a number during this fatal year, there are two whose humble memory the Anglo-Saxon historian has not scorned to mingle with his narrative of the political and military events of Essex and East Anglia. One of them was still in perfect health, when she was told that a little child, who had been received and taken care of by the sisters, had just died, and with its last breath had called her thrice, "Edith! Edith! Edith!" Immediately she lay down on her bed, and died the same day, to follow her innocent forerunner to heaven.[2]

Another, who was very young, but had been long ill, and was now in extremity, commanded those who watched her to carry away the lamp. "Put it out—put it out," she said, without ceasing, though she was not obeyed. "You suppose me mad, but I am not mad, and I tell you that I see

[1] "Egressæ de oratorio famulæ Christi . . . ecce subito lux emissa cœlitus, veluti linteum magnum . . . tanto eas stupore perculit, ut etiam canticum quod canebant tremefactæ intermitterent. Ipse splendor emissæ lucis, in cujus comparatione sol meridianus videri possit obscurus. . . . Ut nulli esset dubium, quin ipsa lux quæ animas famularum Christi esset ductura vel susceptura in cœlis, etiam corporibus earum," &c.—BEDE, iv. 7.

[2] "Puer trium circiter annorum . . . qui propter infantilem adhuc ætatem in virginum Deo dedicatarum solebat cella nutriri ibique medicari. . . . Clamavit . . . proprio eam nomine quasi præsentem alloquens, Eadgyd, Eadgyd, Eadgyd. . . . Ipso quo vocata est die . . . illum qui se vocavit ad regnum cœleste secuta est."—BEDE, iv. 8.

this house full of such a light that your lamp troubles me with its obscure glimmer." Afterwards, when nobody would listen to her, she resumed: "Light your lamps then, and keep them as long as you please. But as for me, I have no need of your light; mine is elsewhere, and at dawn it will come for me." At dawn she was dead.[1]

VII

History has retained but these few names, and it is not without difficulty that even these can be gleaned from chronicles and legends. The veil of forgetfulness and indifference has fallen between us and the distant centuries. That great fire, lighted by faith and charity in the souls of so many new and fervent Christians, is now extinguished; a few feeble rays scarcely reach us through the night of ages. That great garden of fragrant flowers, of blessed and glorious fruit, is now seen and enjoyed only by God; scarcely does a passing breath waft to us the faint lingerings of its perfume. Myriads of souls, candid and worthy, simple and delicate, sweet and fervent, which must have peopled these immense and numberless monasteries of old, will never be known to us! How many young and touching lives are thus buried in the darkness of forgetfulness, until the day when before the assembled universe they shall shine with the brightness of everlasting glory!

But in those distant ages they formed, for the honour and consolation of their country and the Church, a great army, numerous, hardy, and dauntless, bearing the glorious ensigns of sacrifice with magnanimous serenity and humble fervour.

[1] "Cœpit subito circa mediam noctem clamare petens ut lucernam . . . extingueret: quod cum frequenti voce repeteret. . . . Scio quod me hæc insana mente loqui arbitramini. . . . Vere dico vobis quod domum hanc tanta luce impletam esse perspicio, ut vestra illa lucerna mihi omnimodis esse videatur obscura. . . . Accendite ergo lucernam illam quamdiu vultis; attamen scitote quia non est mea; nam mea lux, incipiente aurora, mihi adventura est."—BEDE, iv. 8.

They confessed victoriously before the new-born Christianity and the beaten-back barbarism of their age, as their sisters in the present time confess, in the face of our over-proud civilisation, the divinity of Jesus Christ, the atonements of suffering, and the immortal empire of the soul over inferior nature.

In all these noble maids, betrothed to God, there appears a sort of courage and strength which is above their sex. It is the special attribute of monastic life to transfigure human nature, by giving to the soul that which is almost always wanting to it in ordinary existence. It inspires the young virgin with an element of manfulness which withdraws her from the weaknesses of nature, and makes her at the necessary moment a heroine; but a soft and tender heroine, rising from the depths of humility, obedience, and love, to reach the height of the most generous flights, and to attain everything that is most powerful and light-giving in human courage. It fills the heart of the true monk and true priest with treasures of intelligent compassion, of unlimited tenderness, of gentleness unmixed with laxness, and of an unremitting patience such as the heart of woman alone seems capable of containing. And sometimes to both, to the bride of God and to His minister, to the heroine of charity and to the master of doctrine and preaching, it adds by a supernatural gift the incomparable charm of childhood, with its artless and endearing candour; then may be seen upon a living countenance that simplicity in beauty, and that serenity in strength, which are the most lovely array of genius and virtue. Thus it happens by times that all that is most grand and pure in the three different types of humanity, the man, the woman, and the child, is found combined in one single being, which accomplishes all that a soul can do here below to rise from its fall, and to render itself worthy of the God who has created and saved it.[1]

[1] AUBREY DE VERE, *Thoughts on St. Gertrude.* Cf. T. W. ALLIES, *The Formation of Christendom*, 1865, Part I., Lect. 6, *Creation of Virginal Life.*

I speak in the present tense, for all this exists still, and is found and repeated every day in the bosom of our modern civilisation.

Every trace of the ancient world of which we have been endeavouring to seize an impression, has disappeared—everything has perished or changed, except the army of sacrifice. The vast and magnificent edifice of the ancient Catholic world has crumbled hopelessly to pieces. There will rise, and already, indeed, there does rise, a new world, which, like the ancient, will have its own greatness and its own littleness. But that of which we have just told the history has lasted, still lasts, and will endure for ever.

Twelve centuries after the Anglo-Saxon maids whose devotion we have related, the same hand falls upon our homes, upon our desolate hearts, and tears away from us our daughters and sisters. Never since Christianity existed have such sacrifices been more numerous, more magnanimous, more spontaneous, than now. Every day since the commencement of this century, hundreds of beloved creatures have come forth from castles and cottages, from palaces and workshops, to offer unto God their heart, their soul, their virgin innocence, their love and their life. Every day among ourselves, maidens of high descent and high heart, and others with a soul higher than their fortune, have vowed themselves, in the morning of life, to an immortal husband.

They are the flower of the human race—a flower still sweet with the morning dew, which has reflected nothing but the rays of the rising sun, and which no earthly dust has tarnished—an exquisite blossom which, scented from far, fascinates with its pure fragrance, at least for a time, even the most vulgar souls. They are the flower, but they are also the fruit; the purest sap, the most generous blood of the stock of Adam; for daily these heroines win the most wonderful of victories, by the manliest effort which can raise a human creature above all earthly instincts and mortal ties.

Have you seen in March or April a child breathing in the first fresh breath of nature, the first gleam of admiration lightening in his bright eyes as they meet the gleam of awakening life in the woods and fields? There does the spring-time of life meet with the spring-time of nature, and to witness this meeting is a delight and a charm. But still more enchanting and more enrapturing by far, a rapture by which the soul is borne away to the utmost height of human emotion, is the sight of a virgin creature already budding into womanhood, radiant with youth and beauty, who turns away from all the fragrance of life to breathe only the breath, and look only towards the glories, of heaven.

What a scene is this! And where can one be found which manifests more clearly the divine nature of the Church, or which throws more entirely into the shade the miseries and stains with which its heavenly splendour is sometimes veiled?

But, let us again repeat, this sight is afforded to us everywhere, not only in our old and unhealthy Europe, but in that America[1] which all generous spirits regard with hope and confidence. Wherever the Gospel is preached, wherever a crucifix is raised, everywhere does Christ, with His irresistible arm, pluck and uproot these earthly flowers to transplant them nearer to heaven.

Spoilers and oppressors may in vain resume their persecutions, which are daily predicted and provoked by the writers of revolutionary Cæsarism. Devoted and outlawed chastity will resume its task. In the garrets or cellars of

[1] "We are penetrated with the most profound respect for those holy virgins who fill our religious communities. We fulfil one of the pleasantest of duties in giving public witness to the virtue and heroism of those Christian maidens whose lives exhale the sacred odour of Jesus Christ, and who, by their devotion and their spirit of sacrifice, have contributed more perhaps than any other cause to produce a happy change in the minds of those estranged from our faith."—*Pastoral Letter of the Archbishops and Bishops of the United States, assembled in full Council at Baltimore*, Oct. 21, 1866.

the palaces inhabited by the triumphant masters of the future, over their heads or under their feet, virgins will be found who shall swear to Jesus Christ to belong only to Him, and who will keep their vow, if necessary, at the cost of their life.

In this age of laxity and universal languidness, these gentle victors have kept the secret of strength, and in the weakness of their sex, let it once again be repeated, they exhibit the masculine and persevering energy which is wanting in us, to attack in front and to subdue the egotism, cowardice, and sensuality of our time and of all times. They accomplish this task with a chaste and triumphant hardihood. All that is noble and pure in human nature is led to the fight against all our baseness, and to the help of all our miseries. Speak not of the charms of a contemplative life, of the peaceful joys of meditation and solitude. These are but the lot of few. Nowadays the great self-devoted crowd throws itself into quite another path. They rush forth to the rescue of the most repulsive and tedious infirmities of poor human nature, lavishing upon them unwearied cares; they swarm wherever they are wanted to cultivate the deserts of ignorance and of childish stupidity, often so intractable and restive. Braving all disgusts, all repugnance, all denunciations and ingratitudes, they come by thousands, with dauntless courage and patience, to win, caress, and soothe every form of suffering and of poverty.

And, along with their strength, they have light, prudence, and true insight. They understand life without having experienced it. Who has taught them all these sad secrets? Who has taught these beings, at once so pure and so impassioned, at an age when the heart begins to be consumed by an insatiable thirst for human sympathy and human love, that such a thirst will never be satisfied in this world? Who has revealed to them the disgraceful frailty of earthly affections, even of the noblest and sweetest, the fondest and most deeply rooted, even of those which

believed themselves everlasting, and held the greatest place in the hearts out of which they have miserably perished? Nothing but a divine instinct which frees them by withdrawing them from us. They are delivered from that withering amazement of the soul which meets disappointment, betrayal, and scorn instead of love, and sometimes, after so many struggles and so many delusions, the silence of death in the fulness of life. They have forestalled their enemy, unmasked, baffled, and discomfited him. They have escaped for ever: "Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the net of the fowlers: the snare is broken, and we are escaped."

Thus they go bearing off to God, in the bloom of youth, their hearts, full of those treasures of deep love and complete self-renunciation which they refuse to man. They bury and consume their whole life in the hidden depths of voluntary renunciation, of unknown immolations.

When this is done, they assure us that they have found peace and joy, and in the sacrifice of themselves the perfection of love. They have kept their hearts for Him who never changes and never deceives; and in His service they find consolations which are worth all the price they have paid for them—joys which are not certainly unclouded, for then they would be without merit, but whose savour and fragrance will last to the grave.

It is not that they would forget or betray us whom they have loved, and who loved them. No; the arrow which has pierced our hearts, and remains there, has first struck through theirs. They share with us the weight and bitterness of the sacrifice. Isolation from the world is not insensibility. It is only a false spirituality which makes the soul hard, arrogant, and pitiless. When religion dries up or hardens the heart it is but a lying tyranny. Here, in true sacrifice, in supreme self-mortification, human affection loses none of its rights. They are all respected, but all purified, all transformed into an offering to God, who has promised to comfort us more than a mother—"So shalt thou be son of the Most

High, and He shall love thee more than thy mother doeth." The warmth of tenderness, afflicted yet so pure, so straightforward, and so sure of itself, glows forth in every word, in every look. The blessedness of belonging to God will never close a noble heart to the griefs of others, or deprive it of any generous emotion. That heart becomes, on the contrary, more tender and more closely entwined to those it loves in proportion as it is entwined into a closer bond with the heart of Jesus.[1]

Is this a dream?—the page of a romance? Is it only history—the history of a past for ever ended? No; once more, it is what we behold and what happens amongst us every day.

This daily spectacle we who speak have seen and undergone. What we had perceived only across past centuries and through old books, suddenly rose one day before our eyes, full of the tears of paternal anguish. Who will not pardon us for having, under the spell of that everlasting recollection, lengthened, perhaps unreasonably, this page of a long uncompleted work? How many others have also, like ourselves, gone through this anguish, and beheld with feelings unspeakable the last worldly apparition of a beloved sister or child?

One morning she rises, she comes to her father and mother—"Farewell! all is over," she says; "I am going

[1] "However firm might be the resolution of Theresa to leave her father, the tender affection she bore him rendered the separation heartbreaking to her. 'I believe,' she says, 'that at the point of death I could not suffer more than I did then. It seemed as if my very bones were dislocated because my love of God was not strong enough to triumph wholly over the natural tenderness I had for my parents. I was obliged to do myself extreme violence in leaving them, and if the Lord had not helped me, my good resolutions would never have enabled me to follow out my plans to the end; but His goodness gave me courage against myself. At the moment when I took the habit, God made me conscious how He blesses those who deny themselves for His sake. This internal struggle was known to Him only; on the surface nothing appeared in my conduct but courage and firmness.'"—*Histoire de sa Vie*, c. iii., ap. LE BOUCHER.

to die—to die to you and to all. I shall never be either a wife or a mother; I am no more even your child—I am God's alone." Nothing can withhold her. "They immediately left the ship and their father, and followed Him." [1] Lo! she comes already arrayed for the sacrifice, brilliant and lovely, with an angelic smile, fervent and serene, blooming and beaming, the crowning work of creation! Proud of her last beautiful attire, bright and brave, she ascends to the altar, or rather she rushes—she flies like a soldier to the breach, and, hardly able to keep down the impassioned ardour which consumes her, she bows her head under the veil which is to be a yoke upon her for the rest of her life, but which will also be her eternal crown.

It is done. She has crossed the gulf with that impetuous bound, that soaring impulse, that magnanimous self-forgetfulness, which is the glory of youth, with that pure and unconquerable enthusiasm which nothing here below will ever equal or extinguish.

Who, then, is this invisible Lover, dead upon a cross eighteen hundred years ago, who thus attracts to Him youth, beauty, and love? who appears to their souls clothed with a glory and a charm which they cannot withstand? who darts upon them at a stroke and carries them captive? who seizes on the living flesh of our flesh, and drains the purest blood of our blood? Is it a man? No: it is God. There lies the great secret, there the key of this sublime and sad mystery. God alone could win such victories and deserve such sacrifices. Jesus, whose godhead is amongst us daily insulted or denied, proves it daily, with a thousand other proofs, by those miracles of self-denial and self-devotion which are called vocations. Young and innocent hearts give themselves to Him, to reward Him for the gift He has given us of Himself; and this sacrifice by which we are crucified is but the answer of human love to the love of that God who was crucified for us.

[1] Matt. iv. 22.

APPENDIX

HEXHAM

(See page 15.)

DESCRIPTION OF THE CHURCH BUILT AT THE MONASTERY OF HEXHAM BY ST. WILFRID FROM 674 TO 680

"Igitur profunditatem ipsius ecclesiæ criptis et oratoriis subterraneis, et viarum anfractibus inferius cum magna industria fundavit.

"Parietes autem quadratis et bene politis columpnis suffultos et tribus tabulatis distinctos, immensæ longitudinis et altitudinis, erexit. Ipsos etiam et capitella columpnarum quibus sustentantur et arcum sanctuarii, historiis et ymaginibus et variis cœlaturarum figuris ex lapide prominentibus et picturarum et colorum grata varietate mirabilique decore decoravit. Ipsum quoque corpus ecclesiæ appentitiis et porticibus nardique circumdixit quæ, miro atque inexplicabili artificio, per parietes et cocleas inferius et superius distinxit. In ipsis vero cocleis,[1] et super ipsas, ascensoria ex lapide, et deambulatoria, et varios viarum amfractus, modo sursum, modo deorsum, artificiosissime ita machinari fecit, ut innumera hominum multitudo ibi existere et ipsum corpus ecclesiæ circumdare possit, cum a nemine tamen infra in eo existentium videri queat. Oratoriaque quam plurima, superius et inferius, secretissima et pulcherrima, in ipsis porticibus cum maxima diligentia et cautela constituit, in quibus altaria in honore Beatæ Dei

[1] Ducange, at the word *Cochlea*, says: "Cochleæ sunt altæ et rotundæ turres et dictæ cochleæ quasi cycleæ, quod in eis, tanquam per circulum orbemque, conscendatur."

genitricis semperque Virginis Mariæ, et sancti Michaelis Archangeli, sanctique Johanis Baptistæ et sanctorum Apostolorum, Martyrum, Confessorum, atque Virginum, cum eorum apparatibus, honestissime præparari fecit. Unde etiam, usque hodie, quædam illorum ut turres et propugnacula, supereminent. Atrium quoque templi magnæ spissitudinis et fortitudinis muro circumvallavit. Præter quem in alveo lapideo aquæductus, ad usus officinorum, per mediam villam decurrebat."[1]

[1] RICHARDI PRIORIS, *Historia Hagulstadensis Ecclesiæ*, c. iii., ap. TWYSDEN, *Historiæ Anglicanæ Scriptores Decem*, and RAINE'S *Priory of Hexham*, p. 11.

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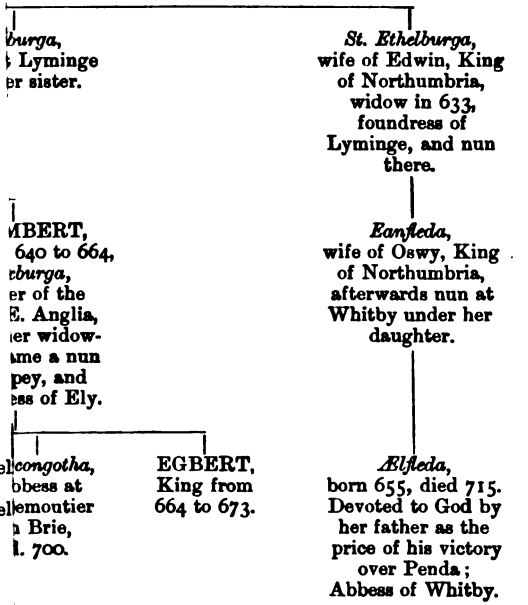

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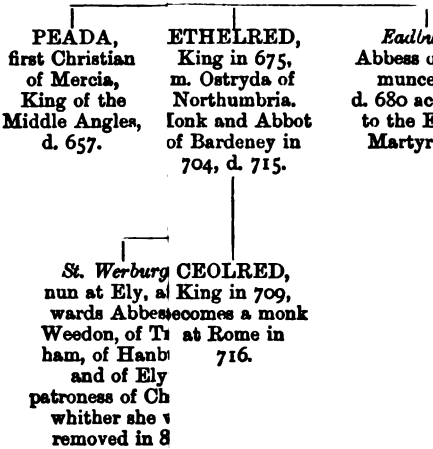
PEADA, first Christian of Mercia, King of the Middle Angles, d. 657.
ETHELRED, King in 675, m. Ostryda of Northumbria. Monk and Abbot of Bardeney in 704, d. 715.
Eadburga, Abbess of Dortmuncester, d. 680 according to the English Martyrology.
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CEOLRED, King in 709, becomes a monk at Rome in 716.

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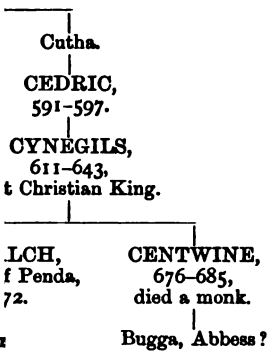

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